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INRI
The
Christian
Pattern

THE
CHRISTIAN's PATTERN:
OR, A
TREATISE
OF THE
IMITATION
OF
JESUS CHRIST.

In FOUR BOOKS,
Written Originally in *LATIN*
By THOMAS a KEMPIS.
Now render'd into ENGLISH.

To which are added,
PRAYERS and MEDITATIONS for SICK PERSONS.

BY
GEORGE STANHOPE, *D. D.*
Dean of Canterbury, *and Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.*

Compar'd with the ORIGINAL, and the Tranſlations by the Rev. Mr. WESLEY, *&c.* and in ſeveral Places amended.

MANCHESTER:
Printed by R. WHITWORTH, near the *Exchange*.
MDCCXL

BODLEIAN
17 8 1914

British Museum duplicate

TO THE

KING's

Moſt Excellent Majeſty,

The following

TRANSLATION

Of an Excellent, Serious, and Uſeful

TREATISE

Is Humbly Dedicated, by

His MAJESTY's

Moſt Dutiful Subject,

The EDITOR.

THE

PREFACE.

THE *Tranſlation of this excellent Book by the learned and ingenious Dr.* Stanhope, *which has been ſo well received by the Publick, that above Twenty Thouſand of them have been ſold, is principally followed in this Edition, tho' not without conſulting thoſe publiſhed by Mr.* Weſley, *and an ingenious anonymous Author; and as in this Edition more Aſſiſtance has been had than in any former one, it is hop'd it will juſtly claim the Preference.*

The Preface to Dr. Stanhope's *Tranſlation being ſo well adapted to this, take it almoſt* verbatim *as follows.*

The Reputation of this little Book, with which the Reader is here preſented, ſeems abundantly eſtabliſhed, by the great Pains taken to communicate it to Mankind, in moſt Languages of the Chriſtian World. But ſince the Engliſh *Verſion, hitherto in Uſe, was in ſome Places grown obſolete, and in many fell ſhort of that Life and Spirit requiſite for ſuch Devotional Tracts, it was thought expedient to recommend it by a Style* *more modern, and a little better ſuited to Subjects of this Nature.*

In this Attempt the Latin *of* Caſtalio *is chiefly followed; he hath taken ſome Liberty in Places peculiarly relating to the* Romiſh *Superſtitions: And the preſent Tranſlator hath not only trodden in his Steps thus far; but, in the Chapters which concern a Monkiſh Life particularly, hath endeavoured ſo to expreſs himſelf for the moſt part, as that ſuch Meditations might be accommodated to the Circumſtances of any pious Chriſtian, who makes Religion his main Pleaſure and Buſineſs, and is daily ſtriving to habituate himſelf to the Exerciſe of Devotion and ſeverer Virtues.*

This was thought moſt agreeable to the great Deſign he had in View, that of rendering theſe Reflections of general Uſe to the World: For which Reaſon alſo, he hath not been nicely cloſe in many of the Flights uſual with theſe myſtical Divines; thinking it better either to give thoſe rapturous Paſſions another Turn; or, by Additions and Illuſtrations of his own, to bring them down to the common Condition of human Life, and fit them for the Mouths of every ſincere practical Chriſtian.

In order to preſerve the Zeal and Spirit of the Author, it was found neceſſary, ſometimes to abridge, and at others to enlarge a Thought, and carry it a little higher: All which the Reader hath this Warning of, to prevent any Objections which might otherwiſe be raiſed, againſt the Faithfulneſs of an Undertaking, intended, not ſo much to acquaint Engliſhmen *what* Kempis *thought, as to convey thoſe Thoughts with ſome Degree of that Sprightlineſs and affectionate Warmth, which the original Compoſer at firſt felt from them.*

And becauſe the Reader will perhaps expect ſome Account of him, here follows in brief the Subſtance of what Roſweid *hath delivered concerning him.*

“ *This* Thomas *was call'd* a Kempis *from a little Village of that Name, in the Dioceſe of* Cologne, *where he was born in the Year of our Lord* 1380. *His Parentage and Fortune were mean; at thirteen Years old he began his Studies, and about nineteen betook himſelf to a Monaſtery of* Auguſtin *Monks: About five and twenty he took the Habit of that Houſe and Order. There he continued for the Space of ſeventy Years, particularly eminent for his Piety, Humility, diligent Study of the Holy Scriptures, Auſterity of Life, moving Eloquence in Diſcourſe, and extraordinary Zeal in Prayer. For his Perſon, he was of a middle Stature, of a ſtrong brown Complection, a lively piercing Eye, and a Sight ſo good, that though he laboured much under other Infirmities of old Age, yet he was never reduced to the Uſe of Spectacles. He died* July 25, 1471, *in the ninety-ſecond Year of his Age.*”

Thus far the learned Doctor abovemention'd. It may be added, that the good and devout Author of this Book was very affable, courteous, and condeſcending to the very weakeſt and loweſt of Chriſtians; a Comforter to the Troubled, a compaſſionate Helper to thoſe under Temptations, exceedingly zealous for the Salvation of Souls, which he as earneſtly deſir'd as his own; and it was his main Endeavour to draw alſo others with himſelf by his Writings, by his verbal Admonitions, by his private Inſtructions, and by all other Ways and Means he had in his Power to Holineſs and Happineſs. He lived agreeable to what he *taught and wrote, and verified that his Doctrine was not impracticable.*

The following Directions, chiefly taken from Mr. Weſley, *may be ſerviceable to the profitable Reading of this, or any religious Book.*

I. *Set apart ſome Time every Day for reading this, or ſome other pious Treatiſe. If any unavoidable Buſineſs deprives you of your Hour of Retirement, take the next vacant one for it. When ſuch large Portions of each Day are ſo willingly allow'd for bodily Refreſhments, and Diverſions, I wiſh I could ſay always innocent ones, how can you ſcruple to allot ſome little Time for the Care of your infinitely more valuable Part, your immortal Spirit?*

II. *Be ſure to read with great Attention and Seriouſneſs, not haſtily and careleſſly; ſtop every now and then, to recollect what you have read, and conſider how to reduce it to Practice. If your Underſtanding is not encreaſed, it will be loſt Time to read, and if your Will and Affections are not influenced, you will certainly be in a worſe Condition, tho' the other is a very bad one, when you come to give up your Accounts at the Bar of the All-ſeeing Judge.*

III. *It may be of very great Uſe to read over and over ſuch Paſſages as moſt nearly affect you. Forget not to conclude always with a ſhort Ejaculation to God, which the Publiſher begs Leave to join with you in, that his holy Spirit would aſſiſt your ſincere Endeavours to encreaſe in Humility, Benevolence, Patience, Reſignation to the Will of God, and every other Virtue.*

OF THE
IMITATION
OF
JESUS CHRIST.

The FIRST BOOK.

CHAP. I.

Of the Contempt of the Vanities of the World.

HE that followeth me, ſhall not walk in darkneſs, but ſhall have the light of life, ſays that Chriſt, who declares himſelf *the light of the world.* The true importance and deſign of which words is, doubtleſs, to inſtruct us, that the way to be truly enlightened, and to deliver ourſelves from a blindneſs of heart, is to make his holy life the object of our imitation, and to form our diſpoſitions and actions upon the perfect model of that bright example. But how ſhall we follow a pattern, which we but little think of? The firſt ſtep *John* viii. 12.

therefore toward thus copying after him, is the employing our thoughts, with great frequency and ſerious attention, upon the perfections of this divine original.

2. The doctrine taught by Chriſt, excels all the inſtructions deliver'd to mankind, by all the holy men that ever lived. And every man, endued with a true chriſtian ſpirit, will not fail there to find a hidden manna, like that of old, fitted both to nouriſh, and miniſter delight to his ſoul. The true reaſon then why men hear the goſpel, without any ſenſible reliſh, or eager deſire, is, that they are not endued with the ſpirit of Chriſt. This is a treaſure found of them only who heartily deſire to find it; and a man muſt reſolve and endeavour to form his whole converſation upon the principles of that doctrine, before he can attain to a full underſtanding of its excellence, and feel an inward ſatisfaction in the ſtudy of it.

3. And here indeed lies the true benefit of meditation and knowledge: for, without this, how poor and unprofitable a thing is ſpeculation? What is a man the better, for entering into the ſublime myſteries of the Trinity, and being able to diſpute nicely upon that adorable union, if in the mean while he want that meekneſs and humility, without which he muſt needs lie under the diſpleaſure of the Trinity? Diſtinctions and notions, tho' never ſo ſubtle or ſerviceable to the truth, do not make a man juſt and holy; but a circumſpect and conſcientious life recommends us to the favour and love of God. I had rather be affected with a true penitent ſorrow for ſin, than be able to reſolve the moſt difficult caſes about it. Suppoſe you had every word of the Bible

treaſured up in your memory, and a perfect comprehenſion of all the moral philoſophy in the world; to what purpoſe ſerves this mighty ſtock of rules, if not drawn out into Uſe by benevolence to mankind, and humility and real goodneſs? *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity*, ſaid the Preacher; *Eccleſ.* i. 2. and his obſervation admits of that ſingle exception, taken notice of in the concluſion of his book, *love God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.* *Chap.* xii. 13. He who would approve himſelf wiſe in good earneſt, muſt firſt by a juſt contempt of this world, raiſe himſelf up to the deſires and endeavours after the kingdom of heaven.

4. Vanity indeed it is, with great ſolicitude to ſeek, and place our hope and confidence in riches, which are ſure to periſh. Vanity, to cheriſh our ambition, and ſtrive, by all poſſible means, to attain a high and honourable ſtation. Vanity, to indulge the deſires of the fleſh, and court thoſe pleaſures, which draw after them grievous and laſting pains. Vanity moſt exquiſite, to be infinitely concerned for living long, and perfectly indifferent, or but coldly affected, concerning living well. Vanity moſt fatal and ſtupid, to determine our thoughts and cares to this preſent life, and never look forward to that which is to come: to doat upon things that fly ſwiftly from us, and cling faſt about imaginary and tranſitory delight; while we ſuffer our ſelves by theſe to be detained and diverted from the purſuit of ſubſtantial and eternal joys.

5. Oh, turn this vehemence of deſire upon the right object, and remember, to how little purpoſe it is placed on that which cannot give content; ſince moſt true is that obſervation, which ought to make

Ecclef. i. 8. us wiſer, *The Eye is not ſatisfied with Seeing, nor the Ear filled with Hearing.* Uſe then thy utmoſt diligence, to wean thy ſoul from *the Love of Things that are ſeen*, and *ſet thy affections on Things that are not ſeen.* For, be aſſured, that they, who follow their own ſenſual appetites, do loſe, not only their labour and expectation, but alſo their innocence and purity, the peace of their own conſcience, and the favour of Almighty God.

CHAP II.

MODESTY.

THE deſire of knowledge is natural to every man, but what advantage is it to be knowing, if that knowledge be not ſeaſoned with virtue and religion? The vileſt peaſant, and he, whom we in ſcorn think leaſt removed from a brute, if he ſerve God according to the beſt of his mean capacity, is yet a better and more valuable man, than the proudeſt philoſopher, who buſies himſelf in conſidering the motions of the heavens, but beſtows no reflection at all upon thoſe of his own mind. The certain conſequence of knowing a man's ſelf truly, is a mean opinion of himſelf, and not being exalted with the commendations of other people. And ſuppoſing my knowledge ſo vaſt and extenſive, that nothing this world contains were hid from it; yet what would all this avail me in the ſight of God, who, when he comes to judgment will try me upon the iſſue, not of what I have known, but what I have done?

2. Reſtrain that extreme deſire of increaſing learning, which at the ſame time does but increaſe ſorrow, by involving the mind in much perplexity and

falſe deluſion. For ſuch are fond of being thought men of wiſdom, and reſpected as ſuch: and yet this boaſted learning of theirs conſiſts in many things, which a man's mind is very little, if at all, the better for the knowledge of. And ſure, whatever they may think of the matter, he who beſtows his time and pains upon things that are of no ſervice for promoting the happineſs of his ſoul, ought by no means to be eſteemed a wiſe man. Words and notions in themſelves give no real ſatisfaction; but a virtuous life never fails to comfort and refreſh the mind, and to miniſter the beſt antidote againſt all manner of difficulties; for ſuch is a good conſcience, and a well grounded *confidence towards God*, which is its inſeparable attendant. 1 *Joh.* iii. 21.

3. The more a man knows, and the better thoſe ſubjects are, upon which his ſtudies have been employed; the heavier ſhall his account be, unleſs his piety and virtue be proportionably eminent and exemplary. How little reaſon then have we to be exalted with our attainments, when we know our account will be larger, as we improve more in knowledge. And what improvements indeed can poſſibly be ſo great, as to juſtify our being proud of them? For no man can ever want this mortification of his vanity that what he knows is but a very little, in compariſon of what he ſtill continues ignorant of. Conſider this, and, inſtead of boaſting of thy knowledge of a few things, confeſs and be out of countenance for the many more, which thou art ignorant of. And why ſo forward to prefer thyſelf before others, when there are ſo many perſons whoſe learning, and ſkill in the rules of living, give them an undoubted right to be preferr'd before you? If you would attain to

uſeful learning indeed, learn to conceal your attainments, and be content that the world ſhould think meanly of you: for lowlineſs of mind, and not thinking of a man's ſelf *more highly than he ought to think*, is the moſt difficult, but withal the moſt profitable leſſon; and the preferring others before ourſelves, is a point of true wiſdom and high perfection. Nor ought our opinions of this kind to be changed, though we ſhould ſee another guilty of ſome egregious folly, or very grievous wickedneſs, ſince we ourſelves are men of like paſſions and frailties; nor can we tell how long our own virtue may continue unſhaken. Remember then, that infirmities are common to all mankind; and ſo remember it, as to perſuade yourſelf, or at leaſt to ſuſpect, that theſe are dealt to thee in as plentiful a meaſure, as to any other perſon whatſoever.

CHAP. III.

The Doctrine of Truth.

BLeſſed is the man, whom truth condeſcends to teach; not by dark figures, and words quickly forgotten, but by a full and familiar communication of itſelf. Happy ſhould we be, could we but ſee things as they are, free from the errors of our fond opinions, and the falſe eſtimates we form from thence. How high a value do we ſet upon the knack of diſtinguiſhing and diſputing nicely, in matters hid from common apprehenſions; but matters too, which to know nothing of will not render a man's caſe one whit the worſe at the day of judgment? Egregious and elaborate folly! over-look uſeful and neceſſary points, as things not worthy our regard; and bend our induſtry

Pſal. xciv. 12.

ſtry to find out thoſe, which either turn to no account, or what is worſe than none. Thus we take pains to be ignorant at laſt, and verify in our own ſelves, the prophet's deſcription of the heathen idols, which *have eyes*, and yet *ſee not*. *Pſal.* cxv.

Why ſhould we then, with ſuch eager toil, ſtrive to be maſters of logical definitions? Or what do our abſtracted ſpeculations profit us? He, whom the divine word inſtructs, takes a much ſhorter cut to truth; for from this word alone all ſaving knowledge is derived, and without this no man underſtands or judges aright. But he, who reduces all his ſtudies to, and governs himſelf by this rule, may eſtabliſh his mind in perfect peace, and reſt himſelf ſecurely upon God. O thou, whoſe very eſſence is truth, unite me to thy ſelf in perfect love! The variety of other ſubjects tires and diſtracts my ſoul; in thee alone I find the ſum of all my wiſhes and deſires. Should all our teachers be for ever dumb, and this great volume of the creatures continue ſhut to us, we might diſpenſe with all the reſt, if thou would'ſt vouchſafe thy own information, and teach us by thy ſelf.

The better acquainted any man is with himſelf, the more he converſes with, and retires into his own breaſt; and the leſs he wanders abroad, and dwells upon things without him, the more extenſive and ſublime is his knowledge, and the more eaſily attained. Becauſe this man receives, and is directed by a ray darted from heaven into his ſoul. A mind ſincere and pure, and firm, is not diverted by multiplicity of objects. For the honour of God is its conſtant aim; and, having but one end to purſue, it is in perfect peace and unity with it ſelf, and does not divide its thoughts with vanity and ſelf-love. For what can be a greater hindrance than our own ambitious and ungovern'd paſſion? A truly good and pious man firſt orders and diſpoſes all his buſineſs regularly, before he enters upon the execution of any deſign: he ſuffers no vicious inclination to divert him, but makes every undertaking ſubmit to the dictates of reaſon and religion. The ſharpeſt as well as the nobleſt conflict is that, wherein we labour to gain a conqueſt over ourſelves; and this ſhould be our principal and conſtant care, to get ground every day, by bringing our paſſions more and more under, and becoming more maſterly proficients in virtue and goodneſs.

Nor may we ſuppoſe any degree of virtue ſo exalted, that it ſhould ceaſe to be a ſtate of proficiency; for ſuch is the condition of mortals, that their utmoſt poſſible perfection in this life, is ever embaſed with an allay of imperfection; and their brighteſt notions are clouded with ſome confuſion and obſcurity. But in the ſtudy of ourſelves we are beſt capable of avoiding miſtakes. Therefore a true ſenſe of what we are, and that humility, which cannot but proceed from ſuch a ſenſe, is a ſurer way of bringing us to God, than the moſt laborious and profound enquiries after knowledge: not that learning is in its own nature blameable; for the underſtanding of any thing whatſoever, conſidered ſimply, and as it really is, ought to be acknowledged commendable and good; the gift and ordinance of God. But the danger is, when we give this the precedence in our eſteem, before things abundantly better; I mean a good conſcience, and a virtuous converſation. The true reaſon then why, in an age where learning is had in univerſal admiration, ſo little profit is made;

and both error and vice do, notwithſtanding, ſo wretchedly abound; is, in truth, no other, than that men generally miſtake their main buſineſs and proper excellence. They had rather cultivate their parts than their manners, and account it a greater accompliſhment, to know much, than to live well.

Oh! would men but beſtow half the pains in rooting out vice and planting virtue in its ſtead, which they are content to throw away upon captious and unprofitable queſtions, and the *oppoſition of ſcience*, falſly ſo called; what a bleſſed reformation ſhould we ſee? Then would not the vulgar, and meaner ſort, abandon themſelves to ſuch ſcandalous, brutiſh, and abominable wickedneſs. Nor would the men of ſenſe and learning, and quality, continue ſo profligate and diſſolute in their manners, and blemiſh, as they do, their honour and attainments, with ſhameleſs and licentious impurities. Surely this could not be, did men but conſider at all, that a day of judgment will come, wherein meaſures will be taken very different from ours; when the enquiry, upon which our affairs muſt all turn, will be, not how much we have heard or read, but how much we have done; not how eloquent our expreſſions, but how pure and devout our lives; how much our manners, not our capacity or breeding, our wit or rhetorick, diſtinguiſhed us from common men. But, if the credit and honour of the thing were the only conſideration; yet even thus, where is the fruit of all this mighty toil? What is become of all the eminent divines, philoſophers, lawyers, orators, perſons celebrated far and near juſt at the time when they lived and flouriſhed? But now ſome body elſe enjoys the gains of all that learning and fatigue; and

1 *Tim.* iv. 20.

'tis odds, whether he that lives upon their labours, ever ſo much as ſends one thought after them. Theſe men, ſo eminent in their reſpective profeſſions, no doubt, thought themſelves conſiderable in their own time; but now that time is gone, and they are loſt in univerſal ſilence. Their very names are buried as deep as their bodies; and the one was ſcarce ſooner out of ſight, than the other out of all mention and remembrance.

Ah wretched men! How have you been deluded? How ſhort and withering a good does that fame and reputation prove, which you vainly promiſed your ſelves would be eternal; always freſh and flouriſhing, always precious in the mouths and memories of poſterity? But this, and no better, is the condition of all worldly honour. Oh! had you but been equally careful to improve in piety, and rendered your virtues as eminent as your learning, your ſtudies then had not been fruitleſs? but followed with a recompence, which would not thus have forſaken you. But this is the fatal error of our age, that infinite numbers are deſtroyed by unprofitable knowledge. They lay themſelves out upon ſubtilties and curioſities, which turn to no account; and the only thing which can make them truly happy, religion and the ſervice of God, that they give themſelves no manner of trouble about, but ſlight, as not worth their care or thought. The great occaſion of the fantaſtical opinions and dangerous corruptions, with which the world is peſter'd, is certainly this, that men propoſe no end of their ſtudies but to be great, and to have other people think as highly of them, as they do of themſelves. And becauſe of all things, they deteſt humility, and a regard to truth; God gives them the due reward of their vanity, and ſuffers them to be ſeduced by their own abſurdities and *imaginations*. If then we would be great, let us take the proper courſe for it: for none is really ſo, but he that abounds in the love of God, and in good works; none is truly ſo, but he, who thinks modeſtly of himſelf, and is got above the temptations of ambition and vain-glory. The man, who is wiſe to purpoſe, counts all this world can boaſt of, but *droſs and dung, that he may win Chriſt*. And he is an expert and learned man indeed, who hath learnt to give the preference to God's will, before his own; who reſolutely complies with his commands, and as reſolutely denies his own evil inclinations.

Rom. i. 21.

Phil iii. 8.

CHAP. IV.

Prudence in our behaviour.

BE *not too haſty in believing every word*, nor the ſuggeſtions of *every ſpirit*; but conſider coolly and leiſurely, and make a conſcience of giving your credit with due caution. Men are much more prone (the greater is the pity) both to ſpeak and believe ill, than well, of their neighbours. This is our infirmity and unhappineſs; but a good man will conſider and make allowances for it. And the effect of this conſideration will be, the ſuſpending his aſſent, and neither believing all he hears, nor officiouſly reporting all he believes.

Prov. xiv. 15.
1 *John* iv. 1.

Ecclu. xix. 5.

It is an argument of great wiſdom, to do nothing raſhly; nor to be obſtinate and inflexible in our opinions. And the cautiouſneſs I juſt now recommended, in crediting and ſpreading reports, is a neceſſary branch of the ſame perfection. Adviſe in your affairs with wiſe and good men; and think it more for your reputation, to be inſtructed by thoſe who underſtand better, than to act upon your own head. A virtuous life makes a man prudent in God's eſteem, and gives true conduct and experience. The more humble and obſervant we are to his directions, the better we ſhall behave ourſelves, and the greater ſatisfaction and peace of mind we ſhall find reſulting from all we do. *Eccl.* xix. 24.

CHAP. V.

Of reading the holy ſcriptures.

THE end we ſhould propoſe to ourſelves in this ſtudy, is the diſcerning and diſcovery of truth, not the obſerving quaintneſs and propriety of expreſſion. That book of God indeed ſhould be peruſed with the ſame ſpirit and temper by which it was dictated. And as the Holy Ghoſt intended the profit of mankind more than niceneſs of words and phraſes, ſo ſhould we aim at growing better livers, rather than wiſer, or more accurate ſpeakers, by what he hath delivered. *Rom.* xv. 4. 1 *Cor.* ii. 1, 4. To perſons thus diſpoſed, the plaineſt and moſt pious parts of ſcripture will miniſter a delight equal to thoſe which are miſterious and ſublime. The authority and ſkill of the penman ſhould be of little weight with us. Nor matters it, whether he were one of great or mean attainments; for the love and deſire of truth is the proper motive to ſtudy; and the ſubſtance of what is ſpoken, not the perſon who ſpeaks, ought principally to be conſidered. 1 *Pet.* xxiv. 25 *All fleſh is graſs, but the word of the*

the Lord abideth for ever; and this word ſpeaks to us in different manners, without any partial reſpect of perſons.

One great inconvenience in reading the ſcriptures, is our own vain curioſity. We loſe much of the benefit which might otherwiſe be gathered from them, by pretending to nice diſquiſitions of difficult points, and labouring to bring to the ſtandard of our own imperfect reaſon, what we ſhould be content to receive with the ſimplicity of an humble obedience, and place to the account of divine faith. If you would read them, and profit by that reading, you muſt do it with a ſubmiſſive and humble, a ſincere and teachable diſpoſition of mind; and account it a greater excellence to believe what God hath ſaid, than to affect the reputation of learning, by ſingularity of opinions, and a bold attempt to bring down all he ſays to your own comprehenſion. If in ſome things you find occaſion to doubt or diſtruſt your own judgment, conſult wiſe and holy perſons, and ſubmit patiently to hear and be inform'd by them. Nor let a vain conceit of your own abilities *Ecclu.* viii. 8, 9. produce contempt of the aphoriſms and parables of the ancients. For, be well aſſured, they were not uttered at all adventures; but they, who delivered theſe proverbial ſentences, knew them to be the reſult of long and judicious obſervation.

CHAP. VI.

Of inordinate affections.

THE moment a man cheriſhes any immoderate deſire, he feels a tempeſt riſing in his ſoul. Pride and covetouſneſs never ſuffer us to reſt; but the poor and lowly in heart, the humble and the contented,

tented, enjoy themſelves in a profound and perpetual calm. He that is ſtill in conflict with his paſſions, and hath not yet attained a compleat victory over them, is eaſily tempted, and often finds himſelf overborn by things not worth his concern. For the remains of a carnal ſpirit, and the ſtrong tendencies to pleaſures of ſenſe, will not ſuffer a man, without great difficulty, to draw his mind off from worldly affections. And therefore while he is endeavouring to do this, it is with ſore travel and pain; he commits a violence upon himſelf, and is provoked to anger and indignation againſt all that oppoſes him in ſo laborious an undertaking.

But if he indulge thoſe deſires, and ſucceed in them, the conſequence is worſe this way, than the other. For then he is ſtung with remorſe for his guilty compliance, and diſcontented to find, that the gratifying his inclination does not yield the ſatisfaction he promiſed himſelf from it. This convinces him by ſad experience, that true peace and content is never to be had by indulging his appetites, but by an obſtinate reſiſtance of them. And ſuch peace cannot be expected in the breaſt of any ſenſual man; for it is the peculiar portion and happineſs of a ſoul raiſed above the world, a zealous and devout, a mortified and refined, and heavenly diſpoſition of ſpirit.

CHAP. VII.

Directions for avoiding pride, and vain confidences.

TO put our truſt in man, or in any other Creature, is moſt egregious vanity. Think it not below you, to ſubmit to the meaneſt good offices for the ſervice of your brethren, *Jer.* xvii. 5.

and the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt; nor count it any ſhame to be thought poor and mean in this world. Do your own endeavour honeſtly, and faithfully; and never doubt of God's aſſiſtance. Depend not upon your own wiſdom, and place not any confidence in the greateſt man living; but let your whole truſt reſt entirely upon the favour of God who bringeth down and *reſiſteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble and exalteth thoſe* who are content to *abaſe themſelves*.

1 *Pet.* iv. 5. *Luke* i. 52. xiv. 11.

Boaſt not of riches, becauſe they are in your preſent poſſeſſion; nor of friends, becauſe they have power and intereſt; but if you will glory, glory in God, who is able to give all things, and willing to give that which is better than all, even himſelf. And why ſhould the ſtrength and beauty of your perſon puff you up with pride, when it is in the power of a very little ſickneſs, to bring upon you extreme weakneſs, and odious deformity? If you be inclin'd to value your wit and addreſs above due meaſure, remember from what hand theſe come, and do not provoke the giver, by abuſing the gift.

Fancy not yourſelf better than your neighbours, leſt God, who knows what is in every man, think the worſe of you upon that account. Nay, value not yourſelf even for what you have done well, for God judgeth not as man judgeth; and what we often are highly ſatisfied with, he ſometimes thinks not fit ſo much as to approve. If you be conſcious of any thing good in yourſelf, think that the ſame or better qualities may likewiſe be found in others: for while you allow their excellencies, it will be much eaſier to preſerve a modeſt opinion of your own,

own. There can come no harm of ſuppoſing every other man better than yourſelf; but the ſuppoſing any man worſe than yourſelf, may be attended with very ill conſequences. *The meek,* ſays the ſcripture, *Pſal.* xxxvii. *is refreſhed in the multitude of peace*; but *Iſa.* lvii. the proud in ſpirit is *like a troubled ſea,* perpetually toſt and driven by the fierce commotions of anger, and emulation and envy, and diſdain, which never ſuffer him to be eaſy and compoſed.

CHAP. VIII.

Againſt too general an acquaintance, and inconvenient freedoms in converſation.

OPEN not thine heart to every man, but make choice of prudent and religious perſons to diſcloſe thy affairs to. *Ecclu.* viii. 19. Frequent not the company of young men and ſtrangers; flatter not the rich, neither affect to be ſeen in the preſence of great men: but aſſociate thy ſelf with the devout, the virtuous the humble; and contrive that thy diſcourſe be profitable. Deſire not the intimate acquaintance of women; but, inſtead of thy converſation, let them have thy prayers; and recommend the preſervation and the reward of their virtue to God. Converſe as much as may be with God, with his holy angels, with thy own conſcience; and complain not for want of company, nor think it an unhappineſs to have but few acquaintance, when thou haſt ſo good company as this always at hand.

Our charity indeed ſhould be univerſal, and extend to all mankind; but it wou'd be very inconvenient, our friendſhips and familiarities ſhould do ſo too. We often find, that a perſon altogether unknown to us, comes recommened by a good character, which makes us paſſionately fond of his acquaintance, and yet this very man, when better known, loſes the great opinion we conceived of him before, and grows cloying and flat upon our hands. And this we may be ſure is no leſs likely to prove our own caſe: for the perſons, with whom we hope to ingratiate ourſelves by a freer acquaintance, frequently diſcover ſomething diſagreeable in us, which makes us leſs acceptable. And therefore, in prudence and tenderneſs both to ourſelves and others, we ſhould be very ſparing in our intimacies; becauſe it ſo very often happens that the more perfectly men are known, the leſs right they have to eſteem.

CHAP. IX.

Obedience and a ſtate of ſubjection.

IT is a very valuable advantage to live under the direction of a ſuperior; and, whatever the generality of men think of the matter, more difficult and hazardous to command than to obey. Many ſubmit more out of neceſſity, than out of any principle of duty or choice; and, to ſuch as theſe, this is a ſtate of continual torment. All they do is againſt the grain, attended with conſtant murmurings and complaints; the life of ſlaves and brutes, and not of men, who ſhould act with a ſpirit of freedom. And this natural liberty no inferior perſon attains to, till he has learnt to obey chearfully, for God's, and conſcience ſake. Whatever poſt you form an idea of, none will give you quiet and inward content, equal with that of a ſtate of ſubjection: many have fed themſelves with fond imaginations, how happy they ſhould be, if they could change their condition for a higher;

but

but few, if any, who have actually made the experiment, have found themſelves a jot the happier or eaſier for it.

'Tis true indeed, every man's own judgment is the proper rule and meaſure of his actions; and hence it comes to paſs, that we are all beſt pleaſed with them who are of the ſame opinions with ourſelves. But 'tis as true, that if God rule in our hearts, we ſhall not think much to recede from our own ſenſe in ſome caſes, when peace and the publick good may be promoted by ſuch conceſſions. For who is ſo abſolutely and compleatly wiſe, that nothing eſcapes his knowledge? If then our knowledge be but partial and imperfect, 'tis but reaſonable we ſhould not be ſtiff in our opinions, but allow a fair hearing at leaſt to thoſe who differ from us. And in ſuch caſes a man gains a great point, when he knows himſelf in the right, and yet in tenderneſs and charity, can comply with the infirmities or miſtakes of others, rather than offend God, by being too tenacious of his own better judgment.

I have frequently been told, that it is much ſafer to take advice, that to give it: for a man may have conſidered and determined well; and yet there may be ſome caſes, which may make it reaſonable to depart from that determination, and give ourſelves up to be determined by other perſons. And when theſe caſes happen, to refuſe ſuch compliances, manifeſtly betrays our own ſelf-conceit, and is not conſtancy, but obſtinacy of ſpirit.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Few words are beſt.

DEcline crowds and company as much as conveniently you may: for frequent diſcourſe, even of news, or indifferent things, which happens upon ſuch occaſions, is ſometimes an obſtruction to virtue, when leaſt intended or ſuſpected ſo to be. The world and its vanities eaſily take hold of us, and our minds are enſnared and captivated, before we are aware. How often have I found reaſon to wiſh, that I had not been in company, or that I had ſaid nothing, when I was there? If we examine, how it comes to paſs, that mutual converſation gives ſo great delight, notwithſtanding we ſo ſeldom enjoy that pleaſure with perfect innocence; the true account, I think is this, that we find ourſelves diverted by diſcourſe, and unbend our thoughts from ſeverer ſtudies: that what we deſire, and are moſt fond of, or what we have the greateſt averſion to, lies uppermoſt in our minds; and therefore we propoſe ſome eaſe in diſcharging ourſelves upon theſe ſubjects.

But how very ſeldom do we find that eaſe we propoſe by doing ſo? For this outward conſolation mightily takes off from that inward and ſpiritual ſatisfaction, in which true happineſs conſiſts. Therefore it is our duty to watch and pray, and to fill up the empty ſpaces of life, with theſe holy and devout meditations. And if at any time the refreſhments of company be choſen, and convenient; a ſtrict guard ſhould be ſet upon our tongues, that they utter nothing amiſs; but improve theſe very diverſions to the edification of ourſelves, and them that hear us. Impertinent and laviſh talking is in itſelf a very vicious habit, and a wretched hindrance to our ſpiritual proficiency. And theſe two conſiderations ought to make us extremely cautious in our converſation. But it is the privilege of virtuous and religious diſcourſe, that piety and goodneſs are wonderfully promoted by ſuch conferences. And then eſpecially, when perſons of the heavenly ſpirit and temper frequent one another's company, with a deſign of improving by it.

CHAP. XI.

Of peace of mind, and a deſire of improvement.

MEN might live quiet and eaſy enough, if they would be careful not to give themſelves trouble, and forbear meddling with what other people do and ſay, in which they are no way concerned. But how ſhould he be eaſy, who makes other men's cares his own? Who induſtriouſly ſeeks diſquiet, and when he might reſt in peace within doors, goes abroad to invite and fetch diſturbance home to his houſe; who takes ſuch pains, and ſpends ſo much time to enquire into the affairs of neighbours and ſtrangers altogether foreign to him; and ſeldom or never deſcends into his own breaſt, that he may examine and know himſelf. *Bleſſed are the meek*, ſays the ſcripture, *for they ſhall inherit the earth peaceably*, *and increaſe their joy in the Lord.* Whence is it, think you, that ſome holy perſons can ſo perfectly abſtract themſelves from the concerns of this world, and find ſuch ſatisfaction in their divine retirements, and ſolitary contemplations? From hence, no doubt, that they have made it their buſineſs to mortify all earthly and ſenſual affections, and ſo have devoted them-

Matt. v. 5.
Iſa. xxix. 19.

themſelves entirely to God, and are at liberty to attend upon him without diſtraction. But we find the caſe much otherwiſe with us; becauſe our paſſions interrupt our piety, and the tranſitory things of this world continue tenderly to affect us. We ſeldom gain an entire conqueſt over any one ill habit; nor are we zealous to make every day we live a ſtep to higher degrees of virtue. This is the reaſon why we are ſo cold and inſenſible, or at beſt but lukewarm and indifferent, in the exerciſes of piety and private meditation.

Were we but, as we ought to be, dead to the world and our own luſts, diſentangled from thoſe chains and ſnares within, that hamper and keep our ſouls cloſe to matter and ſenſe; then ſhould we alſo reliſh acts of devotion, and be raviſhed with marvellous joy, when our thoughts are fixed on God and heaven. The only, or the greateſt bar to theſe ſpiritual delights, proceeds from paſſions unſubdued; and from our own ſloth, which cares not to encounter difficulties, nor aſpires to the perfection of the ſaints. Hence is that lowneſs and dejection of ſpirit, ſo viſible, ſo ſcandalous, when any little misfortune comes acroſs us: hence our vain confidence, and anxious care, which ſeeks and depends upon human helps and remedies; and neglects God, our only ſufficient refuge and deliverer.

Would we but quit ourſelves like men, and reſolutely ſtand our ground, we ſhould not fail of ſuccours from above. God is always ready to ſtrengthen thoſe who ſtrive earneſtly, and place their hope in the aſſiſtance of his heavenly grace: he means our very hardſhips and dangers for our good; and engages us in new conflicts and temptations, that he may make our victories more glorious, and qualify us for a brighter crown. If we content ourſelves with the obſervance of the outward duties only, and ſuppoſe this is the utmoſt perfection neceſſary for us; we bring religion into a very narrow compaſs, and may quickly get to the end of it. But, alas! the main of our buſineſs lies within: the axe muſt be laid to the root of the tree, and our ſenſual appetites quite ſubdu'd before we can attain to true pleaſure in holineſs, and a peaceful ſerenity of mind.

Would we but impoſe upon ourſelves the task of mortifying a freſh luſt, and conquering a vicious habit every year; even thus in a little time we might attain to ſome perfection. But, alas! we often take the direct contrary courſe; and are generally more cautious, more devout, more zealous to do well and to avoid evil, when we firſt enter upon a religious life, than after we have ſpent ſome time in it. The fervor of our affection, which ought in reaſon to grow every day ſtronger and brighter, cools and goes out again; and we reckon it a great matter, if our zeal can be kept up to the ſame warmth, which we felt at its firſt kindling. We are too tender of our eaſe, and loth to put ourſelves upon the ſtretch; whereas, would we but uſe a little ſeverity, and ſubmit to ſome violence at firſt, that trouble would quickly wear off; and all our progreſs in virtue would prove, not eaſy and tolerable only, but even a delight, and wonderful ſatisfaction to us.

'Tis hard, I own, to part with our old acquaintance, and to leave off habits to which we have been long accuſtomed. And harder yet it is, to enter into a formal war with our own inclinations, and obſtinately to deny what we eagerly deſire. But if we do not conquer ſmaller difficulties, what will become of us, when aſſaulted by greater? If we do not reſiſt our natural propenſions at firſt, before inclination is ſtrengthened by cuſtom, the enemy will gather ſtrength. Every day's practice is a freſh reinforcement; and the longer the delay, the greater will be the difficulty. O think of this in time, and conſider the happy effects of an early and ſerious piety: what peace, what triumphs to yourſelves; what joy to others, to God and Chriſt, to angels and good men, you will certainly procure, by behaving yourſelves gallantly in this ſpiritual warfare. This ſure will balance all the hardſhips of virtue; reproach your cowardice and ſloth, provoke and inflame your diligence and courage; and make you zealous, reſolute, impatient to grow in goodneſs, and advance every day in ſpiritual perfection.

CHAP. XII.

The advantage of afflictions.

IT is good for me, that I have been in Trouble, ſays *David.* Nor is it *David*'s caſe alone; for many men have reaſon to bleſs that providence, which ſends croſſes and calamities upon them. Theſe bring a man's thoughts home, put him upon reflection, and help him to underſtand himſelf and his condition. They ſhew him, that he is in a ſtate of probation and pilgrimage, and forbid him to ſet up his hope and reſt, in a ſtrange country, where he is no better than a ſojourner. *Pſal* cxix. 71.

Nor is it thus with thoſe ſufferings alone, which the immediate hand of heaven inflicts; but even thoſe whereof men are the inſtruments. The injuries and contumelious uſage, the calumnies and cenſures of them who ſpeak and think ill of us, bring their profit with them too; even when moſt unjuſt, moſt undeſerved. For theſe oftentimes are an occaſion of rectifying our meaſures, as bringing us to a juſter and more modeſt opinion of ourſelves. They cure our ambition and vain-glory, and convince us how vain a thing it is, to thirſt after reputation and the praiſe of men, when even innocence and goodneſs cannot protect us from ſlander and reproaches. They teach us to ſet a due value upon the teſtimony of our own conſciences, and the righteous approbation of God, the ſearcher of hearts; when that, which he will not fail to commend and reward, does not often eſcape the contempt and condemnation of the world, nor prevail for ſo much as fair quarter, from our miſtaken and injurious brethren.

It is therefore both our duty and our wiſdom, ſo entirely to place our happineſs and expectations in God alone, that we ſhall not need to be extremely ſollicitous for many outward comforts, or feel ourſelves deſtitute, or much dejected, when any of theſe happen to fail or forſake us. For when a well-diſpoſed man is oppreſſed with ſufferings and temptations, or perplexed with evil thoughts, he then feels experimentally, how neceſſary the divine aſſiſtance is, and how little he is able to do or endure without it: then he is touched with inward remorſe, then does he groan in ſecret, and, in the anguiſh of his heart, pour out his requeſts for relief and deliverance: then even life itſelf becomes a burthen, and death deſirable; as that which will tranſlate him from this valley of tears and corruption, to a life of immortality with his God and redeemer. In a word, ſuch circumſtances as theſe are more effectual than ten thouſand arguments, to convince him, by his own ſenſible experience, that perfect ſecurity, and entire ſatisfaction, are not ſo much as conſiſtent with the condition of man in this preſent world; and therefore we muſt be content to wait another and future ſtate, which chiefly deſerves our affections, becauſe it alone can make us truly and compleatly happy.

CHAP. XIII.

Of reſiſting temptations.

SO long as we continue in this world, we muſt not flatter ourſelves with being exempted from tribulations and trials. Theſe are ſo inſeparable from mortality, that *Job* calls the life of man a *warfare*, or *place of exerciſe*. It highly concerns every one of us upon this account, to take great care for managing himſelf under his temptations; to watch and pray diligently; as being duly ſenſible that he hath a watchful enemy to deal with, one who will not fail to take all advantages of deceiving, and who *goes about continually, ſeeking whom he may devour*. Nor muſt our attainments in virtue diſpoſe us to remit of this care, for virtue is no abſolute ſecurity. No man is ſo perfect, ſo holy, as never to be aſſaulted, or out of the reach of this adverſary. We may defend ourſelves againſt his attacks, but ſtill attack'd we moſt certainly ſhall be.

Job. vii. 1. *See* lxx. E. vulg.

1 *Pet.* v. 8.

Now tho' there is great hazard and uneaſineſs, yet is there likewiſe great profit to be made from temptations; particularly, as they contribute to the humbling our minds, to the purging off our droſs, and the making us wiſer by ſuffering. This is the rough way to happineſs, which all the ſaints of God have travell'd before us, and by it at laſt were ſafe conducted to their journey's end: and they who fell off and were diſcouraged at the ruggedneſs of the paſſage, are all reprobates and caſt-aways. No order or profeſſion of men is ſo ſacred, no place ſo remote or ſolitary, but that temptations and troubles will find them out and intrude upon them.

Nor ought it to ſeem ſtrange, that theſe ſhould haunt and purſue us cloſe, at all times and places; ſince we ourſelves carry about us the very matter of our temptations, and can never run away from thoſe natural propenſions, upon which they work, and from whence they take occaſion to deſtroy us. This is the account we may reaſonably give ourſelves, why there ſhould be ſuch an uninterrupted ſucceſſion of temptations and miſeries, and why one trouble ſhould preſs ſo hard upon the heels of another. For how indeed can it be otherwiſe; ſince with our innocence we loſt our ſafety and happineſs, and muſt be born to trouble, becauſe the ground of our trouble is now become a part of our nature? Many men involve themſelves deeper in temptations, by being too ſolicitous to decline them. For we muſt not ſuppoſe ourſelves always to have conquered a temptation, when we have fled from it. The nobler, and ſometimes the more effectual way, is to vanquiſh them by patient enduring, and being humbled under them.

Thus much is plain; that by declining a temptation we have not diſarmed it. The root is ſtanding ſtill, and will ſoon be ſprouting again; and a man who flees, is ſo far from getting ground upon his adverſary,

verſary, that he rather encourages him to purſue more vigorouſly. The way to overcome is by patience and long-ſuffering; which, by God's aſſiſtance, and by degrees, tho' perhaps but ſlow ones, is more likely to ſucceed, than heat, and vehemence, and any the violenteſt and moſt obſtinate efforts of our own ſtrength. When you find yourſelf tempted, be ſure to ask advice; and when you ſee another ſo, deal with him gently. Support him with compaſſion, and adminiſter all the comfort in your power, as you could not but wiſh to be treated yourſelf, were you in his afflicted circumſtances.

The beginning of all temptations to wickedneſs, is the fickleneſs of our own mind, and want of truſt in God. An inconſtant and irreſolute man is like a ſhip without a pilot, driven to and fro, at the mercy of every guſt of wind. *Metals are tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of affliction,* Ecclus. ii. 5. We ſeldom know the true extent of our own power, till temptation diſcover it to us. But watchfulneſs, which is always neceſſary, is chiefly ſo when the firſt aſſaults are made. For the enemy is more eaſily repulſed, if we never ſuffer him to get within us, but upon the very firſt approach draw up our forces, and fight him without the gate. 'Twas well adviſed of the poet,

Take phyſick early; med'cines come too late
When the diſeaſe is grown inveterate.

And this will be more manifeſt, if we obſerve, by what methods and degrees temptations grow upon us. The firſt thing that preſents itſelf to the mind, is a plain ſingle thought; this is quickly improved into a ſtrong imagination; that again enforced by a ſenſible delight; then follow evil motions; and when theſe are once ſtirred, there wants nothing but the aſſent of the will, and then the work is finiſhed. Now the firſt ſteps of this are ſeldom thought worth our care; often taken little notice of; ſo that the enemy frequently is got cloſe up to us, and even within our trenches, before we obſerve him; and we have loſt the day, for want of defending ourſelves, while he was in a condition of being reſiſted. For the longer we defer the engagement, the weaker we grow, and the more our adverſary gathers ſtrength.

The ſeaſon of theſe trials is various and uncertain. Upon ſome they are ſeverer preſently after their converſion, upon others towards the latter end of their days. Some have them ſo thick repeated, that their whole life is one continued conflict; and ſome again have but very few and gentle trials. All which different caſes are ordered by a juſt and wiſe God, who knows what each man deſerves, and what he can undergo; and weighs all circumſtances ſo juſtly, that his ſeveral diſpenſations are conſtantly ſubſervient to the ſalvation and happineſs of his choſen ſervants.

We ought not therefore to deſpair when temptations beſet us; but excite our zeal, and pray to God more fervently, that he would be our preſent help and refuge in all our troubles; and, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *That he would with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it. Let us humble ourſelves* under *the trying hand of God,* (1 Cor. x. 13. 1 Pet. iv.) and patiently ſubmit to his good pleaſure in all our tribulations. For thoſe who do ſo *he will exalt in due time,* and *ſave them that be of a meek and a contrite ſpirit,* Pſal. xxxiv.

By temptations and afflictions a man is brought (as it were) to the teſt; by theſe his proficiency is meaſured, and eaſily diſcernable. The greater theſe are, the more acceptable the ſufferer is to God, and the brighter luſtre they add to his virtue. For, to be religious and zealous in the ſervice of God, when no trials aſſail us, is no mighty matter. But if we can ſuffer with patience and reſignation, and continue ſteddy in the love and ſervice of God, when he afflicts and ſends bitterneſs into our ſouls; this argues a noble diſpoſition, and promiſes an extraordinary perfection. Some perſons have come off with ſafety and honour in very ſharp and trying inſtances, and yet are worſted in common and trivial ones. And this caſe is capable of a very good improvement: for thus no doubt God gives men warning, that they ſhould not preſume upon their own ſtrength, but humbly take ſanctuary in him, in matters of difficulty; moved by the experience of that weakneſs, and frailty, which hath yielded to ſlighter and leſs violent temptations.

CHAP. XIV.

Againſt raſh judging.

TURN your eyes inward upon yourſelf; for you can ſcarce exceed in judging your own actions, nor be too cautious and ſparing in cenſuring thoſe of others. *Cenſuring* indeed this deſerves to be called in the worſt ſenſe of the word, rather than *judging*; if we conſider, not only how unlikely to promote any good end, but how liable to infinite miſtakes, and very often how exceeding ſinful all ſuch judgments are. But the examining and judging our own ſelves is a work very becoming us; ſuch as we are qualified to undertake, and always turns to good account. We generally determine and give ſentence, juſt as we ſtand affected to perſons and things; our own paſſions and private prepoſſeſſions blind our minds, and either hinder us from diſcerning the truth, or from letting it have its due weight with us. Whereas, if we proceed from no other principle but the love of God; thoſe matters, which diſagree with our own ſenſe of things, wou'd be allow'd fairer Conſideration, and be leſs uneaſy to us.

But oftentimes ſomething foreign to the caſe in hand, either lurking privately in our own breaſt, or happening from without, engages and draws our minds after it. Many people act upon private reſpects and perſonal intereſts, even when leaſt ſenſible that they do ſo. Theſe men continue well ſatisfied, ſo long as things agree with their own inclination; but are out of all patience, upon the leaſt difference and contradiction. And hence it comes to paſs, that good correſpondence is ſo often broke, and quarrels commenced between friends and neighbours, even men of piety and the moſt ſacred profeſſions, upon no other ground, than that they do not think and act alike.

The reaſon of this ſeems to be that mighty aſcendant, which uſe and inveterate habits naturally gain upon us. We can very hardly be perſuaded to change a practice or opinion, which we have been educated in, and long accuſtomed to; or to ſuppoſe, that other men ſee farther into things than ourſelves. The man therefore, who leans more to his own underſtanding and ſtudy, than to that principle of virtue, which ſhould diſpoſe him to an entire ſubmiſſion to Chriſt and his doctrine, is by no means in a condition of having his mind enlightned by God. For God expects that we ſhould be ſubject to him without any reſerves, and thinks it fit, that a religious love and obedience ſhould take place of our own reaſonings, which by ſerious reflection wou'd be often found weak and incluſive.

CHAP. XV.

Of works of charity.

THIS is a conſtant and univerſal rule, that no conſideration of any advantage, no regard of any perſon whatſoever, muſt ever prevail with us to do an ill thing. But the benefit of a perſon, who ſtands in need of our relief, is oftentimes a ſufficient warrant for leaving a good thing undone; or for changing our meaſures, and chuſing to do one good thing rather than another. For indeed, properly ſpeaking, this is not ſo much an omitting to do well, as a prudent contrivance to do better. But, let the thing we do be what it will, it is only the deſign with which we do it, that muſt recommend it: and, as without charity, both all we are, and all we do, ſignify nothing; ſo, where this is at the bottom, every thing we do, how mean ſoever in itſelf, is of very great value. For God obſerves by what ſprings we are moved; and meaſures our deſert, by the diſpoſition of the heart, and not by the ſeeming worth of the gift, or the appearances of the action.

The man then, that loves a great deal, does a great deal; the man that does any thing well, in that one thing does a great deal; and he does well, who prefers the good of others before his own private pleaſure or profit. That which frequently paſſes for charity, is really no better than a ſelfiſh and carnal principle. For how very ſeldom do men act upon other motives, than the gratifying their own inclinations, the doing their own will, the proſpect of their own advantage, the expectation of return or reward; ſo conſulting the convenience, not ſo much of others, as themſelves?

Now true and perfect *Charity ſeeks not its own advantage*; and if God, in his bounty, be pleaſed to recompenſe it, yet this recompence is not the thing principally in view, but its great aim and end is the happineſs of mankind. For the ſame reaſon *charity envieth not*, 1 Cor. xiii. becauſe envy is a paſſion proceeding from ſelfiſhneſs and pride. And therefore the man, who acts upon a principle ſo generous, as neither to ſeek his own private intereſt, nor to take ſatisfaction in himſelf, but places all his content and bliſs in God alone, is got above envy, and incapable of ſo mean a paſſion. Charity looks upon God as the ſole beginning and end of all good; the ſource from whence it flows, and the immenſe ocean, in which it is ſwallowed up; the perſon from whom all the ſaints derive their righteouſneſs, and in the fruition of whom the reward of their righteouſneſs conſiſts. And therefore the man poſſeſs'd of this principle, ſets no undue value upon himſelf or others; he takes no part of the merit or honour to himſelf; he is not profuſe in the commendation of others; but aſcribes the whole glory of every virtuous action to the author of all the powers and faculties of his ſoul. Little need be ſaid, to ſhew, that one thus diſpoſed, thus perſuaded of God, as the only, the univerſal good, muſt have ſet his heart upon things above. For ſure the leaſt ſpark of his holy fire will ſerve to kindle in our breaſts the love of heaven and ſpiritual joys; and ſuffice to convince us that all here below is full of vanity, and by no means an object worthy our affections.

CHAP. XVI.

Of bearing with other mens faults.

WHEN you obſerve in yourſelf, or others, any thing amiſs, which you would fain, but cannot cure, your duty in ſuch caſes is to endure it, till God ſees fit to order matters otherwiſe. And a duty this is highly reaſonable, if you conſider, that poſſibly it is much wiſer and better, that theſe faults ſhould not be amended, than that they ſhould. Perhaps God permits them for the trial and increaſe of your patience and humility, without which all our virtues are of no great regard in his ſight. But at the ſame time that you ought to bear, you are no leſs obliged to pray againſt them; to beg that the ill example of them may be no hindrance to you in your chriſtian courſe; and to implore the aſſiſtance of his Grace, for the bearing them in ſuch a manner, that the provocations ariſing thence may never ſhake your temper, or betray you to any ſinful, or ſo much as indecent, exceſs of paſſion.

If a man refuſe to comply with good advice, or to reform upon admonitions and reproofs; you are not, after theſe offers of doing him ſervice have been made and repeated, obliged to contend with him any longer. 'Tis better to commit the whole affair to God, and endeavour to effect that by your prayers, which your diſcourſes could not do. Beſeech him therefore, whoſe infinite wiſdom knows how to bring good out of evil, that his will may be done, and his name glorified; and that all who ſerve and worſhip him, may be led into ſuch actions, as moſt contribute to theſe ends, and are well pleaſing in his ſight. And when you have thus diſcharged your part, ſet yourſelf reſolutely to bear the greateſt infirmities and faults of your brethren without any diſturbance. And, for confirming this reſolution, remember, that you alſo have many failings of your own, by which the patience of other people will have its turn of being exerciſed. And if you do (as certainly you cannot but) ſee this; think how unreaſonable it is, to expect you ſhould make others in all particulars, what you would have them to be; when you cannot ſo much as make yourſelf what you are ſenſible you ought to be. And, indeed, nothing is more common, than to expreſs exceeding zeal in amending our neighbours, and mighty indignation againſt their vices or imperfections; while at the ſame time we neglect the beginning at home, and either quite overlook, or ſeem highly contented with our own.

We take a pleaſure in being ſevere upon others, but cannot endure to hear of our own faults. We are ſurprized and uneaſy at the liberties they take with us, and wonder with what confidence they can pretend ſuch a right over us; and yet there is nothing ſo extravagant, which we do not think we have a right to expect, and reſent it highly to be denied. We ſet up for reformers, declaim at the wickedneſs of the age, and are all for ſuppreſſing and puniſhing it by rigorous laws; and yet are unwilling, that any check or reſtraint ſhould be put upon our own freedoms.

doms. This ſhews, how far we are from obſerving that great rule of equity, the loving our neighbour as ourſelves; and from meteing to others the ſame meaſure, which we are content ſhould be meaſured to us again.

Further yet, ſuppoſing all men to be without faults, ſome excellencies and virtues muſt be loſt too: what would become of patience, what of forgiving and forbearing one another for Chriſt's ſake, if there were no provocations to try our temper? And ſuch there could not be, if every man were perfect, and did his duty. But, as the preſent condition of the world is order'd, God hath furniſhed us with conſtant occaſions of bearing one another's burthens. For there is no man lives without his failings; no man that is ſo happy as never to give offence; no man without his load of trouble; no man ſo ſufficient, as never to need aſſiſtance; none ſo wiſe, but the advice of others may at ſome time or other be uſeful and neceſſary for him: and therefore we ſhould think ourſelves under the ſtrongeſt engagements to comfort, and relieve, and inſtruct, and admoniſh, and bear with one another. Beſides, we ſhall do well to reflect, that afflictions and uneaſy accidents may be the cleareſt indication of a man's goodneſs, and the degrees of his improvement. For we miſtake extremely, in imagining, that any thing which happens to us from without, is the real cauſe of our doing well or ill: Adverſity does not make virtue or vice, but exert and draw them into practice; it does not change the man from what he was, but only diſcovers what he really is.

CHAP. XVII.

Of a recluſe life.

THE man who deſires to maintain peace and a good underſtanding with others, muſt learn in order to it, in many caſes to deny and ſubdue himſelf. If then you would keep your ground, or advance forward in piety and virtue, poſſeſs yourſelf entirely with the notion of your being no better than a ſtranger and pilgrim only here upon earth. As ſuch, be content to forego the enjoyments and eſteem of the world, and to be accounted a fool for Chriſt's ſake. For till this be done, you are not duly prepared to retire, and enter into a courſe of life wholly devoted to God and religion.

The peculiar habit, and tonſure, and other formalities, by which monaſticks are diſtinguiſh'd from common men, add nothing to their ſanctity, nor contribute in the leaſt to render them what they pretend to be. This can only be done by a temper, as different from the reſt of the world, as their way of living; an entire change of manners, and an effectual mortification of their paſſions and deſires. He that retreats out of any other deſign, but the ſervice and honour of God, and the ſalvation of his ſoul, will be ſo far from avoiding miſery and trouble, that he will involve himſelf in new and greater troubles, and become more exquiſitely wretched than the affairs of the world could make him. No body can continue eaſy in his own mind, who does not endeavour to become leaſt of all, and ſervant of all.

Remember then that you come to obey, and not to govern: the ſtate of life to which you are called, is a ſtate of labour and hardſhip, and much ſuffering; not of leiſure, and eaſe, and diverſion. You do not ſo properly forſake, as change your buſineſs. For this ſort of life is ſuch a trial of men, as the fire is of gold: and none make good their poſt in it, but ſuch as are content to humble themſelves, and heartily and chearfully ſubmit to any thing, for God's ſake.

CHAP. XVIII.

Of the examples of holy men in former ages.

IT will much contribute to our progreſs and encouragement in chriſtian virtues, to keep in view thoſe lively patterns, which thoſe holy fathers have ſet us, whoſe zeal and exalted piety ſhone clear in former generations. For, by obſerving the brightneſs of their luſtre, we ſhall at the ſame time diſcern the faintneſs and dimneſs of our own light, and bluſh to find the preſent age ſo much eclipſed by the unequal compariſon. Alas! how poor and mean are our attainments when put into the ballance with theirs! Thoſe excellent good perſons, thoſe affectionate friends and followers of Chriſt, ſerved God inſtantly, in hunger and thirſt, in cold and nakedneſs, in labour and wearineſs, in watchings and faſtings, in prayers and holy meditations, in many perſecutions and ſharp reproaches.

Bleſſed God! how many, how grievous miſeries and hardſhips did the apoſtles and martyrs, the confeſſors and virgins endure heretofore! And not they only, but all thoſe brave and generous ſouls in the primitive and purer ſtate of the church, who made it the ſtudy of their whole lives to tread in the ſteps of their meek and ſuffering ſaviour! Theſe heavenly minded perſons paid no regard to their own lives, that they might preſerve them unto life eternal. How very auſtere, how entirely mortified, was the converſation of the antient hermits in the deſarts? how long, how ſharp the temptations they underwent? how fierce and frequent their conflicts with the enemy of ſouls? how conſtant and fervent their prayers? how rigorous their Abſtinence, how unblemiſhed their chaſtity? how eager their deſires, how indefatigable their endeavours, after higher degrees of perfection? how vigorous and gallant the war they waged againſt their vices and rebellious appetites? how pure and uncorrupt all their Intentions, how free from any mixture of worldly proſpects, and ſincerely fix'd upon God and his glory? the whole day they employ'd in hard labour, the whole night in devotion. From which their very labours did not hinder them; for even theſe were conſecrated too, by the frequent intermingling of prayers and holy ejaculations.

Their great care in a word, was, that no portion of the time God gave them in the body, might be ſpent unprofitably: and what they laboured to make an improvement, their zeal made a delight. For time in their eſteem was much too ſwift: and their devotions ſo far from creating wearineſs, that every hour ſeemed ſhort, and ſnatched away thoſe joys too haſtily, which they felt in converſing with him whom their ſoul loved. Their thoughts were ſo intent, their raptures ſo entertaining, ſo raviſhingly ſweet, that they became almoſt all ſpirit, and quite forgot their bodies, and the care neceſſary for ſupporting them in life. Riches, and honours, and greatneſs, and friends, and relations were now no longer their concern. How ſhould they? when even a part of their own perſons ceaſed to be ſo; and providing thoſe things, without which mortals cannot ſubſiſt, was now grown a trouble, and to perſons ſo abſtracted from fleſh and ſenſe, a painfull and unſeaſonable interruption of better and much more important Buſineſs.

Theſe men 'tis true, had no earthly poſſeſſions, but they who were poor in that Reſpect, were exceeding wealthy in another, rich in the favour of God, and abounding in excellent virtues. What they wanted of outward comforts, was much better ſupplied by the plentiful communications of divine graces, the inward refreſhments and unſpeakable conſolations of the bleſſed ſpirit. Theſe ſtrangers to the world were intimately acquainted with its maker and Lord; and, how meanly ſoever they might think of themſelves, or how deſpicable they might appear in the eyes of others, yet in the ſight of God they were particularly dear, highly honourable and precious. They perſevered in their humility, and ſincere obedience, in their courage and conſtancy, their meekneſs, and patience, and great charity. And by this continuance in well-doing, and contented ſuffering, they made daily advances in ſpiritual perfection, and attained to a wonderfull high pitch of grace and favour with God. By this exemplary piety they are become proper patterns for the imitation of all devout men in after-ages: and tho' but a few in number, ought to encourage and prevail upon us more powerfully to rival their uncommon zeal, than the numerous Examples of negligent and lukewarm chriſtians ſhould do, to ſlacken and ſuffer our piety to grow cold.

To theſe we may add the ardent devotion of thoſe holy men, who retired from the world into cloiſters and cells, which at their firſt inſtitution, were places of great piety and ſevere virtue. Their prayers were frequent and devout, their Emulation in ſpiritual perections noble, their Diſcipline ſtrict and well ordered; their obedience to ſuperiors modeſt and reſpectful. Even thoſe footſteps of their piety ſtill remaining, from which their ſucceſſors have ſince ſo ſcandalouſly degenerated, are ſufficient to inform us, that the firſt combatants in this war againſt the world and the fleſh, were men of gallantry, and juſt renown. But now alas! how wretched a paſs are we come to, when it is counted a mighty matter, if here and there one keep himſelf from tranſgreſſing the Rules of his order, and patiently ſubmit to thoſe Exerciſes, which his profeſſion impoſes upon him? Oh, what a miſerable age of cold indifference and wicked careleſneſs are we fallen into! how are the the holy flames of primitive zeal extingiſhed! and inſtead of being a delight, how great a wearineſs, how inſupportable a burthen, are religious duties and exerciſes become to us! how wretched is that ſtupidity, how profound that ſleep, which now oppreſſes the ſpirit of mankind, when ſo many bright examples cannot prevail with us to ſhake off our ſloath and ſlumber, nor awake our ſouls into any tolerable concern for baniſhed piety and neglected Virtue!

CHAP. XIX.

The Exerciſe of a true Religious Perſon.

THE life of a chriſtian, who hath dedicated himſelf to the ſervice of God, ſhould abound with eminent virtues of all kinds, that he may be really the ſame perſon, which he is by outward appearance and profeſſion. Indeed he ought not only to be the ſame, but much more, in his inward diſpoſition of ſoul; becauſe he profeſſes to ſerve God, who ſees the inward parts, a ſearcher of the heart and reins, a God, and father of ſpirits: and therefore, ſince we are always in his ſight, we ſhould be exceeding careful to avoid all impurity, all that may give offence to him; whoſe eyes cannot behold iniquity. We ſhould, in a word, ſo far as mortal and frail nature can, imitate the bleſſed angels in all manner of holineſs, ſince we, as well as they, are always in his preſence. To this purpoſe it would be expedient, daily to renew our reſolutions of living well, and every morning to refreſh and quicken that zeal, with which they were made at firſt. To beg of God that he would help us, and enable us that day to begin well; to *begin*, I ſay; for all that we have done hitherto ought in lowlineſs of mind to ſeem, and to be acknowledged by us, as nothing.

Great diligence and watchfulneſs is neceſſary, in order to diſcharging faithfully what we have intended, and reſolved zealouſly. For if they, who are moſt ſincere and vigorous in their purpoſes, are yet too often weary, and remiſs in their performance, what do we think muſt needs become of thoſe who purpoſe but very ſeldom, or very coldly? 'Tis true, indeed, the occaſions of our falling off, or fainting in our minds, are various and many; and ſeldom do we allow ourſelves in any omiſſion of religious duties, without even thus perceiving a very ſenſible abatement and decay of zeal. The perſeverance of good men, in the midſt of ſo many difficulties and avocations, muſt be aſcribed to God's favour and aſſiſtance, more than to any care and wiſdom of their own. And good men have always this notion of the thing: for they depend upon God for the ſucceſs of all they do, even of their beſt and wiſeſt undertakings. *A man's heart deviſeth his way, but the Lord directeth his ſteps*, ſays *Solomon*, Prov. xvi. 9. We may contrive and act as ſeems moſt adviſable; but, *as the very preparations of the heart*, ib. i. by which we do ſo, are from the Lord; ſo is the event of our having done it entirely in his diſpoſal.

If at any time a religious exerciſe be omitted upon the account of ſome other act of piety, or ſome work of charity at that time inconſiſtent with it; this does us no diſſervice, and the omiſſion is eaſily repaired. But if thro' any loathneſs or indiſpoſition of mind, if thro' lazineſs or any voluntary neglect of our own, our cuſtomary devotions be paſſed over; this is from a wicked cauſe, and will not fail to have a very ill effect upon us. When we keep our zeal with all our might, and do our very beſt, yet even then we ſhall find ourſelves often defective. But, tho' we cannot arrive at abſolute perfection, nor conquer all our frailties, nor prevent all our hindrances in goodneſs; yet ought not this to diſcourage us from ſtriving and reſolving. And, when we do ſo, we ſhall do well not to content ourſelves with general intentions, but bend our force againſt ſome particular thing: and chiefly againſt ſuch, as we have found by experience to be the greateſt and moſt troubleſome obſtruction to our doing well. The condition of our affairs without, and that of our own ſouls within, muſt be diligently conſidered, and reduced into the beſt order we can; becauſe both the circumſtances of the one, and the diſpoſitions of the other, contribute greatly to our furtherance in piety.

It may be, you cannot at all times recollect and call yourſelf to account, but certainly you cannot want opportunities of doing ſo once every day at leaſt. The morning or the evening are proper for it. In the morning you may lay out your buſineſs for the day following; and, at the return of night again, you may reflect what hath paſt in the day-time; how your thoughts, and words, and actions, have agreed with that ſcheme of behaviour you laid before yourſelf. Where you have tranſgreſſed, how far exceeded, or fallen ſhort, and in what inſtances (for, alas! it is but too likely that you have in many) offended God and man. In this ſcheme you form of living well, quit yourſelf like a man, in reſiſting the aſſaults of the devil. To this end begin with keeping a ſtrict hand over your appetite; for when you have once attained to a rigid and maſterly ſobriety, all other fleſhly deſires and temptations will be vanquiſhed and kept under with much leſs difficulty. To the ſame purpoſe, beware of idleneſs; be conſtantly in action; let reading, or writing, or praying, or meditating, or contriving ſomewhat for the good of others, employ your leiſure hours. Some bodily exerciſes are very fit to be uſed, but theſe will require prudence in the choice of them; for all are not equally convenient; and therefore the nature and degrees of them muſt be conſidered, as well as the temper and conſtitution of the perſon conſulted, to render them profitable.

Some religious exerciſes the community is concerned in, and they muſt be attended to in publick. Others are perſonal, and theſe will be beſt performed in private. This diſtinction is of great uſe, to keep men from acting improperly; for even a good thing may loſe much of its gracefulneſs and commendation, by being done out of due place and time. Another neceſſary caution, which many good people ſtand in need of, is, that you ſhould not be ſo zealouſly bent upon any private devotions or duties, as for their ſakes to ſlight or diſuſe the publick; for theſe require at leaſt an equal degree of your eſteem and care in the attendance of them. But when you have diſcharged your duty in that point, and done all that your particular ſtation, or the commands of your ſuperiors, require from you; then is the proper ſeaſon, and then you will do well, to return into your own breaſt, and employ the remainder of your time, as pious and religious purpoſes ſhall direct. And here again a prudent choice is needful; for all ſorts, even of religious entertainments, are not ſuited alike to our ſpiritual advantage. Some difference ariſes from the conſideration of the perſons, and another very viſible one from the different times and ſeaſons of uſing them. Some are more proper for holy days, others for common days; ſome for feſtivals, others for faſts; ſome for a time of temptation and affliction, others for a peaceful and ſerene ſtate of mind: ſome to perſons in grief, or under calamitous circumſtances; others for proſperity, when the ſpirits flow gaily, and our hearts rejoice and ſing for the goodneſs of the Lord. Particularly it will be convenient in an eſpecial manner to renew and raiſe our ſouls, by very frequent and ſolemn acts of piety and devotion, at the conſtant returns of all the chriſtian feſtivals. For theſe ſhould repreſent to our minds the eternal uninterrupted feſtival of joy and thanks, celebrated by the ſaints in heaven. And this ſhould put our ſouls upon the wing, inflame our devotion, mount us up thither, and make us act even beyond ourſelves; more chearfully, more vigorouſly; as if we were juſt then going to receive that glorious reward of our labour, which theſe glad ſeaſons bring ſo lively ideas of to our thoughts.

And, if the time of our receiving that reward be ſtill delayed, let us be ſo thankful for a longer time given us here, as at the ſame time to be humbled by that very length of life, which the generality of the world are apt to eſteem the greateſt happineſs that can befal them. Let us endeavour to do God ſtill better ſervice, but let us ſuſpect, that we have not ſerved him yet as we ought. For, if we had, he would not have put off our recompence to a farther day; and probable it is, that he does not tranſlate us to heaven as yet, becauſe we are not fit for it. And let us therefore double our care to qualify ourſelves for that glory, which in his own appointed time ſhall not fail to be manifeſted in us. Come he moſt aſſuredly will, and *bleſſed is that ſervant when his lord, when he cometh, ſhall find watching*, Luke xii. 37. *Verily I ſay unto you, he will make him ruler over all his goods, and partaker of the joy of his lord*, Matt. xxiv. 47.

CHAP. XX.

Love of ſolitude and ſilence.

RESERVE a convenient proportion of your time for privacy and converſing with yourſelf; and let this be ſpent in frequent and thankful reflections upon the mercies of God; and in reading good books. Among which I adviſe you by all means to let alone nice diſputes, and unprofitable ſpeculations; and keep to ſuch ſubjects, as may be proper for the exciting your zeal, and quickening your affections, rather than ſuch as may employ the ſubtilty of your wit. Never fear that you ſhall want leiſure for theſe good purpoſes. For if you will prevail with yourſelf to abate the mere impertinencies of life, the unneceſſary converſations, the time ſpent in hearing and telling of news, in enquiring after, and ſpreading about idle reports, and ſuch as are either faulty and frivolous waſtings of your time; you cannot want ſufficient leiſure, and great opportunities, for cheriſhing and improving holy and heavenly meditations. Thus did the moſt eminent ſaints induſtriouſly avoid company and buſineſs, and chuſe to converſe with God in private, as much, and as often, as poſſibly they could.

'Tis a good reflection, which the philoſopher made of himſelf; that he never was in other mens company, but he came out of it leſs a man than he went in. And this is what we may frequently confirm by our own experience, after a great deal of diſcourſe hath paſſed. 'Tis certainly much eaſier for a man to reſtrain himſelf from talking at all, than to enter in diſcourſe, and not ſay more than becomes him: infinitely eaſier to live at home and ſee no body; than to go abroad into company, and return innocent. A man therefore who makes inward and ſpiritual perfection his great end, muſt imitate the bleſſed Jeſus, and often withdraw himſelf from the multitude. No one is qualified to converſe in publick, who is not highly contented without ſuch converſation; nor to entertain, or receive entertainment from others, who cannot entertain himſelf alone with ſatisfaction. No man is fit to govern, who hath not learned how to obey: no man can enjoy mirth with ſafety, who is not at the ſame time in a condition of rejoicing in a good conſcience. None is fit to ſpeak freely, but he who can, without any violence to himſelf, refrain his tongue, or keep ſilence altogether.

Accordingly we may obſerve, that the pleaſures and inward ſecurity of the beſt men have always been tempered with the fear of God. Nor was their humility or their care one whit abated, in conſideration of thoſe extraordinary virtues, and abundant meaſures of divine grace, in which they excelled common chriſtians. But the ſecurity of wicked men, and that ſatisfaction they take in themſelves, ſpring from pride and haughtineſs of temper; and therefore the conſtant effects of it are an undue contempt of others, and a falſe opinion of themſelves.

Never flatter yourſelf with an expectation of abſolute ſafety in this life, whatever your condition, how far ſoever retired from the world, or out of the way of temptation, it may ſeem to be. For it often happens, that thoſe whom the world eſteems in ſtrength and virtue above common men, have been involved in dangers proportionably greater than theirs; meerly upon the account of the too confident opinion they had of their own abilities. And this conſideration makes the being tempted ſometimes a bleſſing, greater than that of living altogether eaſy and free from temptation. For the oftner we are attack'd, the greater check this gives to our ſelf-conceit and ſpiritual ſecurity: and the more we are afflicted, the leſs apt we ſhall be to love or uſe the external advantages of this world, beyond the bounds of decency and moderation. And if a man could ſo perfectly draw off his mind from theſe, as never to purſue any tranſitory pleaſure; never to engage himſelf with the world; O what bleſſed, what perpetual peace of conſcience would that man feel, and even be raviſhed with! Nay, could we but cut off all our unprofitable and groundleſs fears and cares, and employ our thoughts upon ſuch ſubjects only, as are weighty and uſeful; ſuch as promote the honour and ſervice of God, our own ſalvation, and the good of others; how eaſy and quiet, how free from all reproach, would ſuch a one's breaſt be to him!

No man deſerves inward and heavenly comforts, who does not diligently examine, and willingly afflict himſelf. To be qualified for this ſolitude, it is abſolutely needful to obſerve that method recommended by the pſalmiſt, *commune with your own heart in your chamber, and be ſtill*, Pſal. iv. *Enter into thy cloſet, and ſhut thy door about thee*, ſays our Saviour, *Matt.* vi. Advice, which can never be more ſeaſonable, than upon theſe occaſions: for the cloſet will give you the ſatisfaction, which it is ſcarce poſſible not to loſe in a more publick place. And if the cloſet be not pleaſant, the only reaſon is, that it hath been leſs frequented than it ought. To thoſe who at firſt uſe this retirement carefully, it miniſters a pleaſure and ſecret conſolation, above what any company or diverſion in the world can pretend to.

It is by ſilent and ſolitary ſtudy, that the ſoul gets acquainted with the hidden myſteries of ſcripture. Here ſhe finds thoſe floods of pious tears, by which holy men waſh themſelves day and night; here ſhe contracts a familiarity and free intercourſe with God, ſo much the cloſer and more intimate, as ſhe removes to a greater diſtance from the noiſe and hurry of the world. Think not then, that the man who withdraws from his friends and acquaintance is perfectly alone. No, he only changes that for better company, and is viſited in his quiet retreats by God and his holy angels. A wiſe man would rather chuſe to live thus unobſerved, and to proſecute the buſineſs of his ſoul without interruption, than even to work miracles, and attract univerſal admiration and applauſe, at the expence of neglecting his own ſafety.

It is highly agreeable to the character of a perſon entirely devoted to God, to ſtir but ſeldom abroad, to decline being publickly ſeen of men, and to be as little fond of ſeeing the world. For to what purpoſe indeed ſhould any one be eager to ſee that which he muſt not enjoy?

The world paſſeth away, and all the deſires thereof, ſays the apoſtle, 1 *John* ii. 17. Our ſenſual affections invite and entice us; but when the moment of gratifying that inclination is once over, what have you got by the bargain, but ſerious remorſe, and unſettled temper of mind? He that goes out full of ſatisfaction, often returns as full of melancholy and diſguſt; and many a merry evening occaſions a ſad morning. Thus all the pleaſures of ſenſe careſs and court us at the firſt meeting, but at their parting leave a ſting behind, and gall our hearts with ſharp and killing pains. What can you ſee in any other place, which the moſt retired grove or deſart will not preſent to your eye? Here you ſurvey the heavens, here view the earth, here ſee the ſeveral elements, which are the ſeeds and firſt ingredients, of which the whole world and every creature in it are compounded.

But what can you ſee either here or any where elſe, which is of long continuance? You expect, perhaps, that variety will ſatisfy you: alas! it cannot be. For, ſuppoſe you could at one view have all things under the ſun ſet before you; what is there even in this, ſave only the beholding them with your eyes? Turn then thoſe eyes where they may gaze with profit. Look up to God on high; fix them upon the throne of Grace in prayer, and continue ſtedfaſt and firm in this, 'till you obtain pardon for your ſins and errors. Leave the vanities of the world to the vain men of the world; but conſider that you are a child of God, and therefore bend your thoughts and labours entirely to thoſe things which your heavenly father requires at your hands. Invite that Jeſus, in whom your ſoul delights, into your apartment; there ſolace yourſelf with his love; for in that converſation only true peace and ſolid joy are to be found. If this ſeem a paradox, I muſt inform you what is the true occaſion of its doing ſo. Had you never mingled yourſelf with the world, nor imbibed any of its vain notions, your mind had been more ſettled and compoſed. But now the itch of novelty hath taken hold of you, and it muſt coſt ſome uneaſineſs to cure this evil. And 'till that cure be effected, peace and perfect evenneſs of temper you cannot have, nor be reconciled to ſolitude, and the ſubſtantial pleaſures that attend it.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

Compunction of heart.

HE that would grow in virtue and grace, muſt be ſure to preſerve a conſtant awful ſenſe of the divine majeſty upon his mind; checking by this holy fear all his indecent liberties, keeping his appetites and affections under ſtrict diſcipline; and not letting himſelf looſe to light or extravagant mirth. Employ yourſelf therefore in humbling and afflicting your own mind, and this will certainly lead you to a devout and truly chriſtian temper. For infinite advantage is to be had by theſe zealous exerciſes, which folly and inconſideration quickly loſe again. One would wonder indeed, how men can indulge their mirth to ſo extravagant a degree, when the miſeries of this life, and the ſins we have to account for, are ſo many and ſo great, that a man who ſeriouſly conſiders the danger his ſoul is in, can very hardly be merry at all, without ſome ſudden damp upon his ſpirits. It is from the levity of our own unthinking minds, a ſtupid forgetfulneſs of our ſinful condition, and a continuing inſenſible of thoſe ſorrows which ought moſt tenderly to affect us, that we ſo often indulge the exceſſes of laughter and gaiety,. when ſighs and tears would much better become us.

Aſſure yourſelf, there can be no true liberty, no innocent merriment, without the fear of God, and a good conſcience. Happy therefore is the man, who can diſengage himſelf from all thoſe hindrances, which the buſineſs and diverſions of the world caſt in his way; and can give his thoughts up entirely to that godly ſorrow, which worketh repentance and ſalvation. Happy he, that can abandon every thing by which his conſcience is defiled or burthened; and ſet himſelf at liberty from treacherous and enſnaring pleaſures. And this may be compaſſed by reſolution and conſtancy. For, how difficult and contrary ſoever it may ſeem to the general way of the world, and our own former practice; yet no habit is ſo ſtrong, but by frequent and manly attempts the direct contrary habit may be acquired and confirmed.

If you will firmly ſet yourſelf to let other peoples affairs alone, they will follow the example, and not concern themſelves with yours. Do not therefore create unneceſſary trouble to yourſelf, by making other mens buſineſs your own, and involve your thoughts and cares in matters of perſons above you. Leave the great ones of the world to manage their own concerns, and keep your eyes and obſervation at home. Your own ſoul is the thing you ought to look after. This requires your niceſt inſpection, and utmoſt diligence; and the cenſuring and correcting yourſelf is a duty, which ſhould take place above the adviſing or reproving the deareſt friend you have. It may be, this reſerve may be interpreted ſullenneſs, and loſe you the favour and good eſteem of men; but let not that loſs afflict you. There can be no ſo juſt ground of diſſatisfaction and remorſe, as the not behaving yourſelf with all the ſtrict virtue and circumſpection, which becomes a perſon who hath renounced the world, and devoted himſelf to the ſervice of God. 'Tis true, an honourable opinion of us is a comfort: but it is ſometimes better to want variety of comforts, than to have them. This is often the caſe with advantages merely human, the external and the worldly; and, as for thoſe which are ſpiritual, and derived from God, if we be either deprived of theſe, or not ſenſible of their ſweet refreſhment; the fault is our own, who neglect to put ourſelves into a fit diſpoſition for them, by godly ſorrow for our ſins, and abandoning thoſe vain and outward comforts, which ſhould make room for the ſubſtantial and heavenly.

Get therefore a true and perfect knowledge of yourſelf; ſee and confeſs, that you deſerve not any divine conſolation, nay, that you do really deſerve deſertion, and ſorrow, and much miſery. When a man's mind is inflamed with a truly religious zeal, this world appears not only flat and inſipid, but very bitter and loathſome to him. A good man can never fail of diſcovering juſt matter of grief, and many occaſions that provoke his tears. For, whether he conſider his own circumſtances, or thoſe of other men, he will find that no man here is exempted from calamities. And the more cloſely he conſiders his own condition, the greater ſtill will be his concern. But the misfortunes from without might be born with better temper, were there not much more grievous from within. For, of all the miſeries that humble our ſouls with ſadneſs, none are ſo juſtly lamented as our ſins, and infirmities; the wretched load and incumbrance theſe are to our conſcience; and the indiſpoſition, the diſability they bring us under, of attending without diſtraction to holy duties and heavenly contemplations.

By theſe we are engaged upon trifling and unprofitable thoughts, and diverted from weighty and uſeful ſubjects. For would we but turn the current of our thoughts another way, the effect would be viſible

ble and very happy. If we did but ſeriouſly reflect, how certainly we muſt die, as often as we think how long it is likely we muſt live; we ſhould be more zealous and diligent to amend our lives, and provide for that important change. And would we but ſet before our minds a lively repreſentation of thoſe dreadful torments which await the damned in hell; it were not poſſible ſure to ſhrink back as we do, from the auſterities and mortifications of a religious life; or to ſuppoſe any labour and pain which we can undergo in the mean while, a hardſhip not moſt willingly to be choſen, for the preventing ſo dreadful a condemnation. But now, becauſe theſe things are but ſeldom, and very ſlightly thought upon, and we, in tenderneſs to our own eaſe, much rather ſubmit to the ſoothing impreſſions of preſent deceitful pleaſures, than to thoſe harſh and cutting ones of future miſery and anguiſh; we ſtill go on in the ſame coldneſs, and indifference, and indulge our ſloth at the expence of our virtue.

I grant, indeed, that ſome religious ſeverities are tedious and painful to the body. But the fault does not always lie there; for the body ſometimes complains and droops, not ſo much from its own ſuffering, as from the meanneſs and cowardice of the ſoul, which ought to encourage and ſupport it. Beg therefore of God moſt earneſtly, that he would kindle in your hearts a true chriſtian courage and fervent zeal. Dare to entertain yourſelf upon the moſt ungrateful, when they are profitable and neceſſary ſubjects. Prefer the mournings of a pious penitent before all the vain jollity of a wicked and unthinking world; and pray that God would do to thee, what the pſalmiſt ſays he does to his own people, even *feed thee with the bread of tears, and give thee plenteouſneſs of tears to drink*, Pſal. lxxx. 5.

CHAP. XXII.

The miſerable condition of man conſidered.

WRetched thou art, O man, whereſoever thou art; wretched thou muſt be, which way ſoever thou turneſt thyſelf: Beſet on all ſides with miſeries, without remedy, without any poſſibility of eſcape by human helps, and only to be avoided by taking ſanctuary in God. Why then art thou diſquieted at croſſes and diſappointments; when theſe are the portion of all mankind? It is not yours and mine alone, but the greateſt, the beſt men drink of the bitter cup: And no man ever lived in uninterrupted happineſs: None ever ſucceeded in all his wiſhes and attempts; none ever was above calamities, or free from vexation of ſpirit. Since therefore ſo ordained it is, that all muſt ſuffer and be miſerable, are all equally ſo? No, there are different conditions and degrees of ſuffering; and his is certainly the beſt and moſt comfortable, who is called and diſpoſed to ſuffer for the ſake of God and a good conſcience.

It is uſual for men, who know no better, to envy and admire the rich, the great, the honourable; to imagine that princes and perſons of plentiful fortunes are compleatly happy. But this is the effect of great weakneſs and inconſideration. If therefore we would rectify ſuch miſtaken apprehenſions, let us get a right notion of ſpiritual and heavenly advantages. Theſe will convince us of what poor account all worldly enjoyments ſhould be in our eſteem: How very little, how mere a nothing they are; how hard and hazardous to be attained; how uncertain the preſervation of them, and how full of trouble and anxious care, even while we have them. And who would be fond of that, which can neither be got, nor loſt, no, nor kept neither, without fear, and ſorrow, and perpetual ſolitude? Surely then the happineſs of man does *not conſiſt in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth*, Luke xii. 15. 'Tis ſenſleſs and abſurd to think it can. And if no proportion of worldly goods, tho' never ſo large, can exempt us from miſery; then a competent meaſure of them ought to ſatisfy us. For miſerable we muſt be with leſs or more. The very living here upon earth, without any additional calamity, would make us inevitably ſo. The more a man deſires and labours to be like God, the leſs agreeable reliſh he hath of life; becauſe he is ſo much more ſenſible, more thoroughly convinced of the frailty and corruption of human nature. For, what is this viciſſitude, this daily round of eating and drinking, ſleeping and waking, wearineſs and reſt, and the many other neceſſities, which the condition of morality enſlaves us to? Doubtleſs it is a mighty burthen and affliction, to men whoſe minds are wholly fixed upon higher things, and whoſe only ambition it is to get above ſin and infirmity.

For the diſtreſſes and wants of the outward-man, are a ſore hindrance and great oppreſſion to the inward; and we ſhall not perhaps injure *David*'s ſenſe, by ſuppoſing even theſe included in that petition, where he begs of God to *deliver him out of his troubles*, Pſal. xxv. 17. But wretched are they indeed, who are not ſenſible of their wretchedneſs; and yet more ſo ſtill are thoſe vain people, who are even in love with it; who dote upon this mortal life, which expoſes them to it; and cannot think of parting with it at any rate, even when in ſuch uncomfortable circumſtances, that all their time and care is ſcarce ſufficient to furniſh them with proviſions neceſſary for the ſupport of it. And yet theſe infatuated creatures are content to lay themſelves out upon toil and trouble; and, might they but be ſuffered to continue here for ever, could diſpenſe with any concern for God and goodneſs, and willingly forego the hopes and everlaſting happineſs of a heavenly kingdom.

O fooliſh and ſlow of heart to underſtand and believe your true intereſt? How deep are you immerſed in fleſh and ſenſe? How ſottiſhly deluded with droſs, and fond of vanities which cannot profit? Have you no notion left of any thing but body? No regard for a future enduring ſubſtance? Raiſe your affections up to nobler enjoyments, and diſengage them from thoſe groſs, thoſe empty objects, which if you ſtill perſiſt in the love and purſuit of, you will one day be taught by ſad experience, how poor and deſpicable they really are, and how unworthy of all that eager concern you have thrown away upon them. Be perſuaded then by reaſon and religion, and do not provoke God to convince you by torments and too late remorſe, of how fatal conſequence the love of this World is, to all that are immoderately fond of it. View well thoſe illuſtrious patterns of mortification and heavenly-mindedneſs, which the primitive ſaints and favourites of Chriſt have ſet you. Theſe great good men had ſmall regard to the pleaſures of the ſenſe, and glittering gaieties of this world, but kept their eyes and hearts intent upon eternal joys: Thoſe were their hope, their delight, the earneſt and only longing of their ſouls. And therefore the only one, leſt if their affections were at all divided, the love of the things that are ſeen, ſhould faſten down their hearts to mean and earthly objects, and hinder them from ſoaring up on high to the infinitely more precious things that are not ſeen.

This is indeed a work of pains and time; but let not that conſideration drive you to deſpair of attaining an heavenly temper of mind. The undertaking is great, 'tis true; and the time allowed for it but ſhort; but ſtill this ſhort ſpace is enough, if you will take care to make the beſt of it. Up then, and be doing; do not purpoſe well to day, and put off the execution to a farther Day, but rather argue yourſelf into action by ſuch reflections as theſe. This very inſtant is the proper time; this the Seaſon of amendment, and fighting the good fight. It is by hardſhip and ſuffering, that men recommend themſelves to the acceptance and favour of God. He hath ordained, that fire and water, diſtreſs and tribulation ſhould be the way that leads to refreſhment and true bliſs. Without ſome violence upon thyſelf, ſin cannot be ſubdued, nor evil cuſtoms broken. Without ſome uneaſineſs and pain we cannot live; and, while we carry this body of fleſh about us, theſe will make an inſeperable part of the burthen. We wiſh indeed for eaſe and untroubled ſatisfaction; but, as the condition of mankind ſtands at preſent, we wiſh in vain. For in loſing the innocence of our nature, we loſt our happineſs too; and as both left us, ſo both muſt be reſtored together. Patience is now become a neceſſary virtue, and we muſt be content to wait the ſeaſon of God's mercy; when he ſhall fully repair our breaches, heal our infirmities, put a period to our unrighteouſneſs, abſolve the guilt, blot out the remembrance of them, and cauſe mortality to be ſwallowed up of life.

In the mean time, it cannot methinks but be a mighty mortification, to conſider how exceeding prone this frail nature of ours is to ſin. To-day you confeſs your ſins to God, and to-morrow you act thoſe very ſins over again, which you lamented but the day before. This hour you reſolve to be watchful, and take good heed to all your ways; and the very next hour you run on as giddily and raſhly as ever, forget your reſolutions, and ſtand more ſelf-condemned than if you had never reſolved at all. So great reaſon is there for thinking very meanly of ourſelves, and diſclaiming all vain confidences in any thing we are, or do. But theſe ſo ſudden and frequent relapſes are not our misfortunes, but our faults. They are indeed the conſequents of our frailty; but that frailty would not affect us to any conſiderable degree, did not we contribute to it by our own negligence and inconſtancy. And a ſmall neglect will ſoon undo, what coſt much time and labour to effect; nay, what could not have been effected even ſo neither, had not almighty God ſeconded our endeavours with his divine aſſiſtance.

But if we cool ſo very quickly, and *cannot watch one hour*, what will become of us at laſt, and how ſhall we perſevere in faithfulneſs unto the end? Wretched are we indeed, if we faint and grow weary, if we give out and ſeek refreſhment, as if we were already ſafe, and in abſolute peace; when we have ſcarce begun the battle, and gained but little ground in holineſs and reformation of manners. Alas! we are as yet but raw beginners; ſo far from compleat maſters in our buſineſs, that we have ſtill need to learn and practiſe the very firſt rules of living over again, before we can be ſo perfect as we wiſh and ought to be. Nor ſhould we diſdain to do ſo, if thoſe condeſcenſions can prove of uſe to us.

CHAP. XXIII.

Meditations concerning death.

SINCE life is of ſhort and uncertain continuance, it highly concerns you to look about you, and take good heed how you employ it. To-day the man is vigorous, and gay, and flouriſhing, and to-morrow he is cut down, withered and gone. A very little time carries him out of our ſight, and a very little more out of our remembrance. O the hardneſs of mens hearts! O the wretched ſtupidity! that fixes their whole thoughts and care upon the preſent, and will not be prevailed with to look before them, or bear any regard, to that which muſt come hereafter. Whereas, in truth, every work, and word, and thought, ought to be ſo ordered, as if it were to be our laſt; and we inſtantly to die, and render an account of it. Would we entertain ourſelves more with the thoughts of death, it would be leſs a terror to us: for, in proportion as our lives amend, our fears will abate, and a clear conſcience will enable us to meet death with undaunted courage. However fleſh and frailty may impoſe upon us, yet, be aſſured, 'tis greater wiſdom to be afraid of ſinning, than to be afraid of dying; a greater bleſſing to preſerve our innocence, than to prolong our lives. And whence is all this fear and anxiety? Is it becauſe we are not fit to die? But if you are not fit to-day, how do you propoſe to be ſo to-morrow? Alas! to-morrow is uncertain; neither you, nor I, nor any man can depend upon it. Or, if we could, yet what does it avail to live, though it were much longer, when we by longer living grow ſo little better? Aſſure yourſelf, long life is far from being always a bleſſing. Too many, God knows, are ſo far from growing holier, as they grow older, that the number of their days only adds to the number of their ſins, and renders their account more heavy hereafter.

Happy is that man who can comfort himſelf with having employed any one day of his life ſo perfectly well, as he might, and ought to have done. Many reckon up the years of their converſion with great ſatisfaction, and think it a mighty matter that they have ſo long abandoned the world and a vicious courſe. And yet, when the time they boaſt of comes to be compared with the improvements they have made, how ſhamefully little is the good they have done? If dying now be terrible, yet remember that living longer may be dangerous; and many, many a man finds too great occaſion to wiſh, that it had pleaſed God to take him away ſooner. Happy therefore is he who keeps the hour of death conſtantly in view? And from this proſpect of what muſt come, takes care to reconcile himſelf to it, and to put his ſoul into a proper temper for it, when it does come.

If you attend at any time upon a death-bed, and ſee another in his parting agonies; conſider that this friend is gone the ſame way where you muſt ſhortly follow him. In the morning, queſtion whether you may live till night; and when night comes, do not too confidently promiſe yourſelf another morning. Thus ſhall you be in a conſtant expectation, and in a good diſpoſition to die. And be ſure ſo to live always, that death may never overtake you unprovided, nor its ſuddeneſt approach ſurprize you. Many are ſnatched away in an inſtant, and die when they were not in the leaſt aware of it, for *in ſuch an hour as we think not, the ſon of man cometh*, Matt. xxiv. 44. Let not the preparation I am adviſing, be neglected, as a melancholy unpleaſant thing; ſuch as embitters life, and damps mens preſent enjoyment; for be aſſured, whatever ſatisfaction you may take now, when that laſt hour draws on, it will give you quite other notions of the matter. And the reflections upon your paſt improvidence and neglect will be more bitter and afflicting then, than any the moſt ſollicitous forecaſt for dying well, can poſſibly be in the mean time.

O how wiſe, how happy is that man, who makes it his daily care to be ſuch while he liveth as he deſires to be found when he comes to die! We may cheriſh a good hope and great aſſurances of leaving the world to our comfort and infinite advantage, if, while we continue in it we can bring our ſelves to neglect and deſpiſe it if we be zealous to improve in in virtue; in love with diſcipline and mortification if we attend to the exerciſe of repentance; if we be of an humble and obedient diſpoſition; content to deny ourſelves, and ready to undergo any hardſhip for Chriſt's ſake. But if theſe qualifications be neceſſary, they are neceſſary to be attained in health. For then a man is in a condition to ſtrive, and to exert himſelf; but when ſickneſs is upon him, it is a great queſtion what he will be able to do, or whether any thing at all. Whatever the generality of the world may imagine, who put off their great work till ſuch improper ſeaſons; yet ſure it is, that few, but very few, are reformed by a ſick bed. And they who defer their repentance and amendment till then, ſeldom, alas! repent as they ought, or are amended in good earneſt.

Depend not upon the aſſiſtance of your relations and acquaintance: nor cheriſh an imagination ſo vain, as that their prayers hereafter can effect, what you never endeavoured to effect here. Theſe can do you no ſervice; but if they could, yet, when once gone, you will be forgotten much ſooner than you are willing to believe. And why ſhould you reſt upon their care, when you cannot be prevailed with for your own? Can it be ſuppoſed, they ſhould be more concerned for your ſalvation, than you are, whoſe proper intereſt it is? But ſuppoſing they could do you good, yet, even then, 'tis better you ſhould do your own buſineſs; better, in regard of the perſon, and better in regard of the time: for *now* is the ſeaſon of acceptance, *now* is the day of ſalvation. And therefore this moment is the fitteſt for your purpoſe: the ſooner you change, the better: live then while you may; and begin from the preſent minute to live ſo, that you may live for ever. For if you ſuffer the happy opportunity to ſlip thro' your hands, you will wiſh for it afterwards, when it is too late; and you may perhaps be reduced to ſuch circumſtances, that one day, one hour, for making your peace with God may not be obtained; no, not when you would gladly give, were it at your diſpoſal, the whole world to purchaſe it.

Conſider then, my friend and fellow chriſtian, conſider what a riſque you run by your delays; think, what miſery and danger, what confuſion and deſpair it is now in your power to prevent, by living like a man that remembers he muſt die. And therefore to ſpend every hour, that when your laſt draws on, you may receive it with joy and hope, inſtead of fear and aſtoniſhment. Learn *now* to die daily, to die to ſin and the world, that you may then begin to live with Chriſt. Learn *now* to deſpiſe all here below, that you may then be diſengaged, and at perfect liberty to leave all and follow Chriſt. Subdue your body *now* by mortification and ſelf-denial, and you ſhall then have great boldneſs in the day of tribulation.

Does any expectation of long life encourage you to defer putting this good advice in execution ſpeedily? Nay, but reflect, fond man, how uncertainly you can promiſe yourſelf one poor ſingle day. How many inſtances have you before your eyes, or freſh in your remembrance, of perſons miſerably deluded and diſappointed in this hope, and hurried out of the body without any warning at all? How often have you been ſurprized with the news of this friend being run thro', another drowned in croſſing the water, a third breaking his neck by a fall, a fourth fallen down dead at table, or choaked with his meat, a fifth ſeized with an appoplexy at play, a ſixth burnt in his bed, a ſeventh murthered, an eighth killed by thieves, a ninth ſtruck with lightning, or blaſting, or peſtilence, a tenth ſwallowed up in an earthquake. Such vaſt variety of deaths ſurround us, and ſo fleeting a ſhadow is the life of a man.

And if any of theſe happens to be your caſe, who ſhall help, who can ſave you when the precious opportunity is fled and loſt? Be doing then betime; for, tho' you cannot ſo much as gueſs at the hour and manner of your own death, yet ſafe you are, or may be, if you will provide againſt it. Uſe time then while you have it; make haſte to be rich toward God, and let religion and your own ſalvation be your chief, your only concern. *Make yourſelf friends while you may, who when you fail may receive you into everlaſting habitations, Luke* xvi. 9.

Behave yourſelf as a ſtranger and pilgrim upon earth, and do not immoderately ſet your thoughts on things which do not belong to you. For ſojourners are not proprietors, and therefore ſuch ſhould not keep their affections upon things, which they are leaving very ſhortly. Raiſe your ſoul to God and let it dwell there, not where you *have no continuing city, Heb.* xiii. 14. Look up to that which is ſo: ſend your prayers, and tears, and earneſt deſires before you thither; that when God calls, you may readily follow in perſon, and make a happy exchange of this miſerable world for a better.

CHAP. XXIV.

Of the laſt judgment, and the eternal puniſhment of ungodly men.

WHatſoever thou takeſt in hand, remember the end, and thou ſhalt never do amiſs, ſays the wiſe ſon of *Sirach*, Ecclus. vii. 36. And certainly this would prove a moſt uſeful direction, if we by the end underſtand that laſt great account, which will one day be required of all our actions. For how powerful, how happy a reſtraint ſhould we live under, did we but ſeriouſly reflect, and conſtantly ask ourſelves, how we ſhall dare to ſtand before that ſtrict and righteous judge, to whom *all hearts are open, all deſires known, and from whom no ſecrets are hid?* One who cannot, like other judges, be diverted from the ſteddy courſe of juſtice; blinded by bribes and preſents, or ſoftned by ſubtle extenuations, or impoſed upon by feigned excuſes, and ſtudied evaſions; but who weighs all perſons and cauſes by the eternal ſtandard of equity and truth. Ah, wretched guilty creature! ah, ſtupid, unthinking ſinner! that trembleſt at the frown of a man like thy ſelf, and does not fear that bar, where nothing can turn to thy prejudice, but open and notorious faults! How wilt thou appear at this tribunal, or what plea canſt thou urge in bar of ſentence, to him who needs no evidence, but is himſelf privy to thy moſt concealed impieties? Doſt thou know this, and yet go on unconcerned how thou ſhalt eſcape the terrors of that dreadful day? Without thy own care, eſcape thou canſt not: for this judgment is univerſal; all mankind muſt ſtand upon their deliverance; every one muſt bear his own burden; and every one's burden is more than enough for himſelf; ſo that no man will be in a condition of aſſiſting another. To expect any advantage, any atonement then, is moſt ſenſleſs. Thou only canſt prevent thy own deſtruction, and this life is only time of preventing it. Thy holy labours now will turn to good account; thy pious mournings move compaſſion, thy prayers and groans enter the ears of God, and melt him into mercy. The meek and patient man will then be conſidered for his conſtant ſuffering and invincible charity. The grief he now conceives for wrongs, is more for the wickedneſs and guilt of the perſon who does them, than for any inconvenience brought upon himſelf; and this diſpoſition will mitigate his own offence; he heartily forgives, and prays that God would forgive his enemies; and this entitles him to the forgiveneſs of his own treſpaſſes. He is more eaſily provoked to pity, than to anger; and ſhall be dealt with accordingly, by a God long-ſuffering, ſlow to wrath, and ſparing when men deſerve puniſhment. He often treats his body with ſeverity and violence, and continues the rigorous diſcipline, till the fleſh be effectually ſubdued by the ſpirit; and therefore good amends ſhall be made him for theſe voluntary ſufferings, and the neglected pleaſures of ſenſe will be liberally recompenced by the abundance of heavenly and intellectual joys. But then, 'tis plain, theſe good qualities which miniſter an entrance into that bliſs, muſt be attained as ſoon as we can poſſibly. This preſent ſtate of mortality is the only ſcene of action and improvement; and ſince this ſcene ſo ſuddenly may change, we are not ſafe in the delay of one moment. This is in truth our caſe. But we are loth to underſtand it; and ſo inordinately fond of ſenſual delights, that we even take a pleaſure in impoſing upon ourſelves; and by the moſt fatal of all madneſſes, indulge our appetites at the expence, and extreme hazard of our ſouls.

And what is the effect of this, but heaping up more fewel for everlaſting flames to feed upon? For our ſins and luſts kindle and blow up thoſe fires;

and the more heinous and impetuous theſe are, the fiercer and more furious thoſe will be ſure to burn. For, as the torments of ungodly wretches ſhall there be exquiſite for their degree, ſo ſhall they for their kind and quality be ſuited and proportioned to the ſins of each particular perſon; and ſo contrived, as to be moſt ſenſibly afflicting and painful to the reſpective tempers and complexions of men, the habits they have contracted, and the appetites they have indulged. The lazy and ſtupid ſhall be awakened and rouzed into ſenſe, by ſharp ſcourges, and burning ſtings. The glutton and drunkard gnawed with inſatiable hunger, and parched with unquenchable thirſt. The nice and delicate, who propoſed no happineſs here to themſelves, but luxury and pleaſure, ſhall then be tormented with what will be much worſe than the noiſome vapours of flaming pitch, and ſtinking ſulphur. The envious and diſcontented ſhall howl perpetually like mad dogs. The proud and vain-glorious ſhall be confounded with ſhame and contempt. The covetous ſhall pine away with extreme penury and want; and no one vice ſhall eſcape a torture, exactly fitted to make its indulger the moſt miſerable that it is poſſible for him to be. In a word, one ſingle hour in thoſe diſmal pains and horrors ſhall be more inſupportable, than whole ages of that uneaſineſs, which wicked men here have ſo irreconcilable an averſion to ſubmit to, for mortifying their vanities, and amending their lives.

For (which is of all others the laſt and dreadfulleſt aggravation) thoſe miſeries and tortures will have no end, no refreſhment, no intermiſſion. But the ſharpeſt afflictions we endure in this life, will quickly have a period; they have their interval of eaſe and comfort; and thoſe ſorrows, which we feel upon a religious account, are largely recompenſed with ſpiritual conſolations, and ſweet peace of mind. Do not then grudge a little preſent grief; but mourn earneſtly for thy ſins, and bend thy utmoſt thoughts and care to the ſubduing and reforming them; that this ſhort anxiety may deliver thee from eternal deſpair, and anguiſh unconceivable; and thoſe few tears of repentance, may ſecure to thee a portion of everlaſting joy with the bleſſed.

O happy reverſe of all their griefs and ſufferings, which the righteous ſhall find in that day! Then they ſhall ſtand full of hope and humble confidence before that judgment-ſeat from which their haughty and mercileſs oppreſſors, confounded with fear, and amazed with guilt, ſhall ſtrive and wiſh in vain to hide their trembling heads. Then he, who now ſtands tamely at the bar of men, and innocently ſuffers, ſhall then be advanced to a throne, and placed among the ſaints and martyrs, to aſſiſt at the trial of his, once inſulting judges. Then the poor and meek ſhall have great boldneſs, while the proud and great ſinner quake at the preſence of God and the lamb. Then that piety and godly fear, that abſtinence and ſevere virtue, that patient enduring for Chriſt's ſake, which is now thought juſt matter of deriſion and contempt, and counted folly and religious madneſs, ſhall then be acknowledged by its moſt ſatyrical ſcorners, to be indeed the true, the only wiſdom. Then the remembrance of paſt miſeries ſhall be ſweet, and they, whoſe wicked malice exerciſed ſuch patience, ſhall be ſtruck dumb with ſad remorſe and bitterneſs of ſoul. Then all, who devoted themſelves to God and his ſervice, ſhall be tranſported with raptures of joy; and all thoſe who diſregarded or deſpiſed them, ſhall weep and lament. Then the afflicted and perſecuted ſhall bleſs his bitter cup, and feel more refined, more ſubſtantial delights from it, than ſenſual pleaſures, or uninterrupted proſperity could ever bring to the moſt voluptuous and fortunate. Then the plain dreſs of the humble, and ſackcloth of the penitent, ſhall ſhine glorious as the ſun; and all the gay pomp and glittering jewels of the proud and gaudy ſinner ſhall be trampled under foot like dung. Then the cottage ſhall take place of the court, patience appear more eligible than the moſt boundleſs and arbitrary power; the honeſt obedience of an humble faith, more wiſe, than the niceſt cavils of the ſubtleſt wit; and a good conſcience more uſeful learning, than the moſt elaborate ſyſtems of philoſophy. Then the contempt of riches ſhall approve itſelf the greateſt treaſure; devout prayer the moſt delicious entertainment; ſilence and caution the beſt converſation. Then good works ſhall plead better than the moſt accurate eloquence; alms prove the moſt prevailing advocate; ſelf-denial the moſt exalted pleaſure; and the conqueſt of ill habits the moſt glorious triumph.

If then this be (as it moſt aſſuredly is) a true repreſentation of that deciſive day; if this the different fate and effect of theſe ſo very different perſons and practices; conſider, I conjure thee, the circumſtances of thoſe damned: and harden thy ſelf from this reflection, to endure a *little* now, when *that little* will ſecure thee againſt enduring infinitely more hereafter. Make trial of thy ſelf, and if the ſlight difficulties of a religious life ſeem tedious and tireſome, turn the argument againſt thy ſenſual inclination.

tion, and think how thoſe who ſink under theſe will be able to dwell with exquiſite and everlaſting torments. Nor is this a trifling needleſs enquiry, but abſolutely neceſſary, and of mighty moment. For matters are ſo ordered, that perfect eaſe can be no man's portion in *both* worlds. They who chuſe their good things here, cannot have them hereafter too; nor ſhall any man, who indulges ſenſe and pleaſure upon earth, rejoice and reign with Chriſt in the kingdom of heaven.

Suppoſe then, that, from your entrance into the world to this very day, you had enjoyed the utmoſt your heart could poſſibly deſire, of all which is called happineſs; honours, riches, pleaſures, without check, or ſtint, or interruption: yet what good would all this do to you, if it ſhould pleaſe God juſt now to ſtrike you with death? Do not you plainly ſee, without my proſecuting this argument any farther, that all below is vanity and mere nothing, and that the love of God, and a religious life, is the only thing which can ſtand you in any ſtead? This will ſtick by you, when all the reſt forſake you. This is neither deſtroyed by death, nor afraid of puniſhment, but triumphs over both; fills the man with confidence and joyful expectation at the dreadful day of judgment; and ſets him above all the terrors and diſmal apprehenſions of hell and its tortures. But then, this is the peculiar privilege of the ſervants of God; for how is it poſſible for the men who practice and delight in wickedneſs, to think of death and judgment, without fear and perplexity of heart? How ſhould they enjoy quiet, and be eaſy in their minds, if they think at all what is coming apace upon them? Let then the love of God prevail over that of ſin. But if thou art not yet perfect enough to be acted by this noble principle, let at leaſt the love of *thy ſelf* reclaim thee, and the fear of hell reſtrain and deter thee from a courſe, which muſt end at laſt in thy utter and inevitable ruin. This, ſays the ſcripture, *is the beginning of wiſdom*, Pſal. cxi. 10. for he who is proof againſt the fear of God, cannot perſevere in any thing that is good; as having no manner of principle that can ſave him, no curb upon his mind that can awe, or hold him in, from running headlong to perdition.

CHAP. XXV.

Of zeal in the reformation of our lives.

BE fervent in prayer, ſerving the Lord, ſays the apoſtle. And ſuch indeed it highly concerns every one to be in his ſervice. For what is the end we propoſe, by dedicating ourſelves in ſolemn vows to Chriſt? *Rom.* xii. 11. Why do we pretend to renounce the world and its vanities, but that theſe ſacred ties may engage our utmoſt watchfulneſs and diligence, to conform ourſelves to the image of God, by living to him, and like him, and much above the rate of common men? Let not therefore theſe good reſolutions cool upon your hands; but be zealous in piety and virtue. You ſhall ſhortly receive an ample recompence for all your holy labours, and ſee a happy end of grief, and fear, and hardſhip. Be content with *travel and pain* for a very little while, and *you ſhall be ſure to find reſt, and peace and joy to your ſouls. The yoke is eaſy, and the burden is light*, Matt. xi. 28, 30. but *the weight of glory is far more exceeding and eternal.* Be but you careful to diſcharge your part, and then you need never doubt God's making good his. Support and encourage yourſelf with the full aſſurance of obtaining the crown; but take heed, that aſſurance do not arrive at preſumption; nor the proſpect of bliſs, which ſhould excite a more active and chearful obedience, become an occaſion of ſpiritual ſloth or ſecurity.

I remember an inſtance of a perſon irreſolute and wavering in the concerns of his ſoul, divided between hope and fear, who in his prayers was earneſtly intreating, to be aſſured of his own perſeverance; and expreſſing, how happy he ſhould think himſelf, could he but be ſatisfied in this point. Whereupon he was immediately anſwer'd from within, *ſuppoſing you could be aſſured of this, how would you proceed then? Do but act now, as you would think yourſelf obliged to do in that caſe, and never queſtion your perſevering.* This comfortable reply ſettled his mind; and, inſtead of indulging any curious enquiries into events, or anxious doubts concerning the ſucceſs of his endeavours; he inſtantly applied himſelf to conſider what God expected from him, and to ſet about the performance of that, without more to do. *Truſt in the Lord, and be doing good,* ſays the pſalmiſt; *commit thy way to him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs,* Pſal. xxxvii. 5, 6.

The great and common obſtacle to vigorous virtue is the dreadful notion men form to themſelves of the difficulties to attain it, and how laborious a thing religion is. And true it is, exalted piety will coſt many a pungent conflict. But even this conſideration may be ſome encouragement too; when we rightly conſider, that the hardſhip of the undertaking, much to do or ſuffer in obedience to his will; how engaging, how delightful a ſight is this? And again, how offenſive, how very ſhocking, when they, who make the ſame outward profeſſion, ſhall diſhonour and defile it by a ſcandalous and profligate converſation; and, inſtead of that ſevere, that ſpiritual and heavenly life, to which their very name, and the pattern of their maſter obliges them, abandon themſelves to all manner of exceſs, and wallow in the moſt brutiſh and deteſtable pollutions? But, even where men do not degenerate into all this beaſtlineſs; where cares and buſineſs of the world divert and draw them off from better employments, 'tis unſeemly to others, and of ill conſequence to themſelves, to neglect their proper concern, and engage their thoughts and time in matters foreign to their main deſign.

Spirit therefore yourſelf up to duty, by the remembrance of your ſtation, who you are, and what you have obliged yourſelf to be. Bear conſtantly about you a lively idea of Chriſt crucified. Conſider carefully his life, and let the perfection of that, ſhame you into the reforming your own: Your own, I ſay, whoſe very *baptiſm repreſents your profeſſion*, which is, *to follow the example of our ſaviour, and to be made like unto him*; and yet, after ſo many years being called a chriſtian, you are ſtill very far from being one, if *dying to ſin, and living to righteouſneſs, as your Jeſus died and roſe again for you*, be that which makes a chriſtian, and diſtinguiſhes him from other men. If perſons dedicated to piety and virtue, would but with due attention fix their thoughts upon the actions and ſufferings of Chriſt, this ſingle ſubject would furniſh them with inſtructions and motives abundantly ſufficient for their purpoſe. St. *Paul*, we ſee, determined to know nothing but *Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified*; and this indeed, truly known, is the beſt, the moſt uſeful, and of all the moſt comprehenſive learning.

This fires men with an eager holy zeal, and renders them not only exact, but chearful in their duty; it makes them perform what he commands with diligence, and ſuffer all that he ordains with reſignation and contentedneſs. Whereas a negligent and lukewarm chriſtian conſpires againſt himſelf; his life is one perpetual torment, for want of entire ſubmiſſion and fervent love. The trials and afflictions bear hard upon his ſpirit, and the good he attempts is forced and againſt the grain. He feels not the ſupport of ſpiritual comforts; he knows he muſt not have recourſe to worldly ones; or, if he might, they will not do his buſineſs; and ſo he is left deſtitute of all. For by tranſgreſſing the rules of chriſtian diſcipline, he hazards the ſafety of his ſoul; and by ſeeking relief in unreaſonable liberties, he creates freſh torments to himſelf; becauſe theſe cannot ſatisfy his conſcience, but will be ſure to leave ſome diſpleaſure and bitterneſs behind them. And who can ever be eaſy, who is reproached with his own ill conduct, and chuſes a remedy worſe than the diſtemper?

To this pattern ſet us by Chriſt himſelf, it will be of great uſe to add thoſe of the apoſtles, and other eminent lights in the church. Theſe will convince us, what excellencies mere men are capable of; and if we heartily endeavour after their perfections, we ought not to diſtruſt God's aſſiſtance; but may confidently promiſe ourſelves, that an equal degree of zeal will be ſupported by an equal meaſure of grace and ſtrength. Obſerve then their auſterities, their fervent prayers and heavenly meditations; obſerve the great and happy efficacy of them, in raiſing thoſe holy perſons above the world and its temptations, and rendring their converſation all heavenly and divine, even whilſt upon earth. It were indeed a deſirable thing, that we could ſo wholly abſtract ourſelves from fleſh and ſenſe, that the praiſes of God, and attendance upon his commands, the contemplation of his glories, and the ineffable ſatisfaction of devout minds, might be our conſtant and only employment. And happy ſhould we be, if the inordinate cares of life gave no diſtraction to our thoughts, no interruption to thoſe holy exerciſes. But theſe are joys reſerved for a future and better ſtate; we cannot here be ſo refined, we cannot be excuſed from the incumbrances of the body, and its inſeparable frailties and neceſſities. And therefore the virtue proper to our preſent condition is of another nature. Uſe theſe worldly comforts we may, but we muſt not place our happineſs in them; live upon them our bodies muſt, but our ſouls ſhould reliſh God only. Whatever his providence thinks fit for us, we are to receive with meekneſs and contentedneſs; as being well aſſured, that his wiſdom *can*, and his goodneſs *will* chuſe and ordain what is beſt. *In the day of proſperity we may rejoice*, but that joy muſt be ſo tempered with gratitude and moderation, as neither to ſwell into inſolenee and pride, nor to engage our affections in the love of the world. *In the*

the day of adverſity we are to conſider, and entertain the moſt calamitous accidents, without murmuring or diſcontent. In every change of circumſtances, our minds muſt be entirely reſigned to God; for he is all in all, eternal and unchangeable; perfect and happy in himſelf, abſolute and ſole Lord of the univerſe; and every creature is, and ought to be, wholly at his diſpoſal.

But tho' he be always the ſame, and can at any time do what is good in his ſight, yet this is by no means our caſe. Frail, and of ſhort continuance is our character; and this ſhould excite our diligence, *to work while it is day, becauſe our night cometh on apace, wherein no man can work*, John ix. Conſider therefore, you muſt die; die you know not how ſoon; and be afraid leſt that fatal hour overtake you, before the buſineſs of life be finiſhed. Remember that the time once yours, can never be ſo again: the wealth of both the *Indies* cannot redeem a ſingle opportunity, which you have once let ſlip; and therefore lay faſt hold on all that offer, and ſuffer no hour to ſlide by, without its due improvement.

Virtue can never be attained without great pains and diligence; and if you cool and linger in the purſuit, the moment that you gain not ground, you loſe it. For the affairs of our ſouls can never ſtand at one ſtay; but, as oft as we favour ourſelves in point of duty, we decline and fall back again toward ſin, or at leaſt into an indiſpoſition toward goodneſs: but if we cheriſh our zeal, and conſtantly excite its holy fires, by a vigorous attendance upon our buſineſs, we ſhall ſoon feel the comfort of this kindly warmth; and all the difficulties we found or formed to ourſelves, will quickly diſappear. God will give more grace to him that uſes what he gave formerly, and virtue every day will diſcloſe her amiableneſs, and make us more in love with her. Then it is, that the wiſe man's deſcription is experimentally made good to us, *that her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace*, Prov. iii. I readily acknowledge the attempt, I am now adviſing, to be exceeding laborious and great: no bodily toil is to be compared to it; nor any conqueſt over temporal enemies ſo hazardous and expenſive, as that which we gain upon ourſelves, and the adverſary of ſouls. But as the difficulty exceeds, ſo does the benefit and glory likewiſe. This field muſt be entred, and this battle won, or we are loſt for ever; and he, who does not inure himſelf to vanquiſhing, by ſubduing leſs temptations, will never be able to grapple with more violent and trying ones; and infirmities once yielded to, grow inſenſibly to ſtubborn habits of vice. This is a daily warfare, and we may daily reap the fruits of it. For every night will crown us with freſh lawrels, and the reflection upon a day well ſpent, furniſh us with joys more pleaſing than ten thouſand triumphs. Since therefore every day's behaviour is of ſuch mighty conſequence, in giving a turn to our ſpiritual affairs, beware leſt any paſs unprofitably. Watch continually over thy ſelf, and let not this neceſſary fervour abate, for want of care to cheriſh and excite it. Remember that your own ſalvation is the truſt committed to your charge; a truſt of importance greater than the whole world; and therefore, whatever becomes of the reſt, do you ſecure one. To admoniſh and reprove your brethren, while you overlook yourſelf, is a moſt prepoſterous courſe; 'tis neglecting your own province, and invading another man's. You have no right to take the mote out of *his* eye, till the beam be firſt caſt out of *your own*, Matt. vii. If then you would eſcape the cenſure of hypocriſy, begin at home to reform, and be ſure to do that effectually. For the greater violence you are content to put upon your own inclinations, and the ſorer conflicts you undergo, the more meritorious is your virtue, and the more abundant will be your reward.

OF THE
IMITATION
OF
JESUS CHRIST.

The SECOND BOOK.

CHAP. I.

The life of the ſpiritual man.

T*HE kingdom of God is within you,* ſays our bleſſed Lord, *Luke* xvii. 21. Betake thy ſelf then entirely to God, love *him* with all thy heart and all thy ſoul, and bid a total adieu to this wretched world, and thou ſhalt find the quinteſſence of content, and comfort unſpeakable. Learn to deſpiſe theſe outward vanities, and ſeek pure and ſpiritual ſatisfactions. Place all thy hopes, thy happineſs, thy thoughts, in them, and thou ſhalt feel this kingdom ſpring up and grow within thee. *For the kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghoſt*, Rom. xiv. 17. A joy peculiar to the ſaints,

in which wicked and worldly-minded men have no part. Chriſt will approach to thoſe that fly towards him for refuge, meet and embrace them in his arms, and fill them with his heavenly conſolations. He knocks, and waits to come in, and only ſtays till thou haſt ſwept and garniſh'd thy ſoul, and prepar'd an apartment, clean and fit for ſo pure, ſo divine an inhabitant. For all his glories ſhine inward. They are not like the gaudy pomps and glittering outſides of earthly ornaments, but lie deep in the breaſt of his ſaints. There is his beauty, there his ſweet converſation, there his tranſcendant comforts, there the abundance of his peace, and the intimacy of his friendſhip.

Come, then, believing ſoul, to work; and employ all thy diligence, to prepare thy heart for thy beloved; that heavenly ſpouſe, who will not diſdain this poor and homely manſion, and only aſks thy love and care to make it worthy of him. Hear his own gracious promiſe, *If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.* Make room then for this bleſſed gueſt; caſt out the crowd of worldly cares and deſires; admit no partner in thy breaſt, but reſerve thy whole heart for this one inhabitant. This one is enough, for he is more than all the world; and if thou haſt him, thou haſt riches, and honour, and plenty of every thing that is good. He will be thy maſter, thy protector, thy counſellor, thy agent, thy friend, will take thy cares upon himſelf, and manage all thy concerns to the beſt advantage; nor ſhalt thou need any other aſſiſtant, or have occaſion to aſk relief from men. For why indeed from men, whoſe power is ſo ſhort, and their affections ſo inconſtant? They quickly change, and mock the hopes of thoſe that depend upon their kindneſs; but Chriſt endureth for ever, and is a ſure help in all his ſervants extremities. Suppoſing all the ſincerity and zeal for our ſervice, that man is capable of; yet ſtill he is but man, mortal and frail, and cannot always have the ability, even when he had moſt the diſpoſition, to relieve and do us good. Since then ſo little confidence is due to his ſuccours, the concern ought not to be great, if he withdraw or deny them; if he oppoſe and grieve, and labour to do us harm. For this is frequently the caſe, the effect of a fickle temper, that the very ſame perſons, who to-day are our deareſt friends, to-morrow ſhall become our bittereſt enemies. And they, who now are our moſt furious adverſaries, within a little while come over to our ſide. It cannot well be otherwiſe, in perſons ſo unſettled, ſo liable to turn with every breath of wind. Place then thy hope and truſt in him alone, with *whom is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning*, James i. 17. Let *him* be the only object of thy fear and love. In *him* thou art ſure to find a conſtant and powerful friend; one who will heartily eſpouſe thy cauſe, and order matters better than thou thyſelf, if left to thine own choice, could poſſibly do. Alas! thou haſt here no continuing city, but art a ſtranger and ſojourner, and muſt expect to find no ſettlement, till poſſeſs'd of, and united to Chriſt.

Why do thy anxious thoughts look out for eaſe and a fixed happineſs, in a place which is not, cannot be thy reſt? Thy converſation ought to be in heaven, for there is thy home; and all things here ſhould be no otherwiſe regarded, than as refreſhments and conveniencies given to ſupport thee in thy journey thither; things in perpetual motion, and ſuch as paſs away from thee; and things which thou thyſelf art paſſing away from too, as faſt as time and mortality can haſten thee. Do not then imagine, that they can ſtick by thee, or thou by them; but look upon them with an eye of indifference, and keep thy ſoul diſengaged from them. For if thou ſuffer them to faſten upon thy affections, they will enſlave thy mind, and turn to thy eternal ruin. Aſſert then and preſerve thy native liberty, by raiſing thy ſoul above this vain world, and fixing thy deſires and meditations upon the moſt high God. Converſe with Chriſt in prayer, and let this be ſo conſtant, ſo intent, and ardent, as to contract an intimate familiarity with him.

It may be, his glories and divine excellencies are objects too refined and lofty for thy contemplations to dwell upon with reliſh and ſenſible delight. But he hath condeſcended to thy mean capacity; and, by becoming man, afflicted man, hath furniſhed us with matter of meditation, of a ſize with our minds, while dwelling in humanity. Conſider then his poverty and ſufferings. And if thou canſt not ſoar up ſo high as Chriſt ſitting on his throne, behold him hanging on his croſs. Take ſanctuary in his ſtripes and wounds, and death; thoſe ſtripes by which the world is healed; that death, by which mankind live. And, if theſe be well attended to, they will adminiſter marvellous ſtrength and comfort to thy adverſities; enable thee to bear wrongs with eaſe, contempt with patience, calumny and detraction with content. What! was the ſon of God a ſcorn of men, and an outcaſt of the people? Was the king of heaven reduced to wants and neceſſities upon earth, and had not ſo much as *where to lay his head?* Luke ix. 58. Was he, who loved his enemies ſo tenderly as even to die for them, forſaken by his friends? Did Chriſt ſubmit chearfully to endure, and to be deſpiſed? And doſt thou, wretched ſinner, murmur and complain, when poverty or contempt come upon thee? When thy friends deſert, or thy enemies ſlander thee? Did he undergo the malice and *contradiction* of men, and doſt thou hope that all men ſhould favour, and aſſiſt, and ſpeak of thee with honour? Nay, wretched man, entertain not ſo vain a hope. It cannot be; it is not fit it ſhould. For couldſt thou be exempted from injuries and afflictions, what opportunity could there ever be for the exerciſe of thy patience? If nothing croſs ſhould happen in the whole courſe of thy life, how couldſt thou approve thy friendſhip and love for Chriſt? How expreſs thy likeneſs to him? This, the apoſtle tells us, is the condition, this the way, that leads to happineſs, 2 *Tim*. ii. 11, 12. and they, who deſire to reign with Chriſt, muſt not think much to ſuffer both with him, and for him.

Oh! had we but, with *Thomas*, put *our fingers into the print of his nails, and thruſt our hands into his ſide*, John xx. Had we but acquainted ourſelves with his ſufferings, by deep and ſerious conſiderations; and taſted indeed the aſtoniſhing greatneſs of his love; the joys and miſeries of this life would ſoon become indifferent to us. Or rather, they would no longer be indifferent, but we ſhould even rejoice in tribulation, and triumph in the oppoſition, and ſhame, and wrongful dealings of men, which draw us to ſo much nearer and more lively reſemblance of the bleſſed Jeſus. For the love of Chriſt teaches us to deſpiſe ourſelves; and they, who do ſo, will bear the reproaches and deſpiſings of others with eaſineſs and ſedateneſs of temper. A man, whoſe ſoul is united to Chriſt in fervent love, and who hath freed himſelf from carnal paſſions and worldly ſollicitudes; this man, I ſay, is as it were ſpiritualiz'd, can have recourſe to God without diſtraction, lives in a manner by, and within himſelf; nay, is raiſed above himſelf, and enjoys heaven, while yet upon earth. He that hath ſhook off the falacies and prepoſſeſſions of ſenſe, that ſees and judges things, not after the deceitful meaſures of common opinion, but by the ſtandard of truth, and their own regenerate nature; he is the wiſe, the truly learned man, and he is taught this wiſdom, not by human methods, but by inſtructions from above, from God the fountain and perfection of all wiſdom.

This man can never want opportunities of both enjoying and improving his happineſs. The interruptions, which common men lament, cannot affect him. For nothing can take him from himſelf; and ſo long as he hath his own breaſt to retire into, he cannot be deprived of a fit place, and proper ſeaſon, for any holy exerciſe. If buſineſs and the world at any time call him abroad, he always acts and converſes there with cautious reſerve, and keeps it in his power to recollect and retreat again at pleaſure. Bodily labour is no hindrance, for this employs but the leaſt part of him; the cares of life he never lays himſelf out upon, but ſuits his temper to his preſent circumſtances, and only ſtudies to keep his mind eaſy and compoſed: the unreaſonableneſs, and folly, and unaccountable perverſeneſs of other mens humour and behaviour give him no diſturbance, for he is taken up with his own. In ſhort, every man finds more or leſs vexation and obſtruction in the affairs of his ſoul, as he engages himſelf more or leſs in the world; and as he chuſes or refuſes to make thoſe things his care, which are not properly ſo.

A man, whoſe mind is purify'd from the droſs of earth, and diſpoſed as it ought to God and heavenly things, will find that every accident of life contributes to his advantage. For the true reaſon of our paſſion and diſquiet, when things fall out contrary to our expectations or deſires, is the want of that reſignation and temper, which never fails to compoſe the ſpirits of men, mortify'd to themſelves and the world, and diſengaged from the vanities and falſe appearances of happineſs here below. Nothing ſo infects and defiles, ſo entangles and perplexes a man's mind, as a ſordid love of the creatures. But when we can once prevail with ourſelves to deſpiſe theſe trifling, theſe deluſive comforts without us, our retirements into our own breaſts will be frequent, and free; our joys reſulting from them undiſturbed; and our contemplations of heaven and heavenly things full of rapture and tranſport.

CHAP. II.

The advantage of humility.

BE not very ſollicitous what friends thou haſt to appear in thy behalf, nor what foes employ their malice in complotting thee difficulty and trouble; but let it be thy great care to keep God thy friend and helper, and be ſure to preſerve a good conſcience; for, ſo long as thy own heart condemns thee not, God will not fail to plead thy cauſe, and aſſiſt and bleſs thy righteous undertakings. And thoſe whom he receives into his peculiar protection, no wickedneſs or ſpite ſhall be able to hurt. Suffer thou may'ſt indeed, but provided thou learn to ſuffer without murmuring and impatience, thou ſhalt certainly ſee the ſalvation of God. And if this ſeems to tarry, yet wait for it; for he beſt knows the proper time of deliverance, and therefore you ought intirely to reſt upon his all-wiſe diſpoſal. Deliver no doubt he will: the relieving men in diſtreſs, and wiping off the ſhame and reproach of his ſervants, being acts by which God delights to ſignalize his providence. But there is often reaſon, why the doing it ſhould be deferred; ſince the diſcovery of our failings by other people, and the reproofs we meet with upon their account, have frequently a very happy effect upon our minds, and render them more modeſt and humble in their own eſteem of themſelves.

And humility is a virtue of ſo general, ſo exceeding good influence, that we can ſcarce purchaſe it too dear. For he, who is lowly in his own eyes, and ſenſible of his own failings, makes no difficulty to acknowledge his offences againſt his neighbour, and gives all reaſonable ſatisfaction to any who have cauſe to be angry at him. Nor does this forwardneſs to reconciliation expoſe him to the inſults of injurious men; for God charges his providence with a peculiar protection of the humble, and delivers ſuch as are of a contrite ſpirit. He condeſcends to dwell with the humble, and hath engaged to comfort their holy ſorrows. To theſe he promiſes large portions of his grace, and that, *they who abaſe themſelves ſhall afterwards be exalted*, Luke xiv. Pſal. xxv. To theſe he reveals his ſecrets, and draws them to him-

ſelf

ſelf with the cords of love and kindneſs. The humble ſuffers little or no diſturbance of mind, but receives the reproaches and affronts of men without any great impreſſion. For he conſiders, that God, and not the world, is his hope; and if his favour be but ſecured, the reſt cannot be of any very great importance. In ſhort, this virtue is ſo neceſſary, ſo fundamental a one, that no man ought to eſteem himſelf a proficient in goodneſs, who is not yet arrived to that pitch of it, which teaches him to think himſelf the leaſt of all ſaints, and laſt of all men.

CHAP. III.

The peace-maker.

SECURE peace at home in the firſt place; and, when thy own breaſt is thus compoſed, it will then be proper to reconcile and make peace among thy neighbours. And this indeed is a very worthy and reputable action; it brings greater and juſter commendation to a man, and more benefit to thoſe with whom he converſes, than wit, or learning, or any of thoſe other ſo much admired and ſuperficial accompliſhments. And as every thing is ſet off by its contrary, ſo here, the miſchief of a contentious diſpoſition is unconceivable. For nothing can be ſo innocent, nothing ſo well or kindly meant, but ſuch a man will be ſure to fix ſome ill interpretation upon it: but the good temper will be as careful, on the other hand, to take every thing in the beſt ſenſe it is capable of. For a peaceable man is not apt to ſuſpect ill of any; but the peeviſh and diſcontented are rack'd and tormented with a thouſand jealous ſurmiſes, and neither are quiet themſelves, nor content to let other people be ſo. They are very forward in ſaying what they ſhould not; and as backward in doing what they ſhould. Diligent obſervers of their neighbour's duty, and ſcandalouſly negligent of their own. Whereas, in truth, our ſaviour's rule ſhould always be our meaſure; for no man is fit to cenſure or correct his brother, by pulling *the mote out of his eye*, till he have firſt exerciſed a due ſeverity upon himſelf, by caſting *the beam out of his own eye*. And, oh! how happy ſhould we be, how eaſed of detraction, and calumny, and cenſoriouſneſs, if none would take upon them to condemn or cenſure others, till they were firſt qualified for the authority they uſurp, by a thorough amendment of their own manners, and being proof againſt any juſt reprehenſion themſelves?

Who can forbear the obſerving, how manifeſtly unequal we are in our dealings? Every one is ingenious at framing Excuſes, and making large allowances for what he doth himſelf; and yet ſcarce any body admits the apologies introduced by others in their own vindication. How much more juſt and reaſonable were our proceedings, would we but paſs a favourable conſtruction upon the actions of others, and turn the ſeverity of our cenſure upon our own? If you wiſh to be born with, you muſt firſt learn to bear with your brethren, and exerciſe the good-nature you expect, as oft as occaſion offers. For men are beſt taught by examples, and the meaſure we mete gives us a right to receive the ſame again. But is this charity? Is this humility? Nothing more diſtant from it. For theſe diſpoſe us to condemn, and be angry with no body but ourſelves. To keep up a good underſtanding with men of goodneſs and temper, is but a very vulgar virtue. This is eaſy and delightful, for every man naturally deſires quiet and good uſage, and cannot help being well affected to perſons who love, and pleaſe, and are like him. The difficulty is, to carry matters ſmooth and inoffenſively with men of rugged, intractable, and fierce diſpoſitions! With thoſe who make little conſcience of what they do or ſay, and ſtick at nothing unjuſt or unfair in their dealings. And he who can do this, is a truly great ſoul, and ſets a noble and commendable pattern of philoſophical, or which is more, of chriſtian fortitude.

There are a ſort of men, who cheriſh peace and quiet, with themſelves and all the world; and another very vile ſort of wretches, the very reverſe of theſe, who love to fiſh in troubled waters, and are neither eaſy, nor will ſuffer any body elſe to be ſo; conſtantly troubleſome to others, but much more tormenting and vexatious to themſelves. And there are yet a third ſort, who are not ſatisfy'd with giving no offence, but make it their buſineſs to reconcile others, where it hath been given; and to reſtore that peace, which they were never inſtrumental in diſturbing. But when all is done, our life here is expoſed to continual miſery and contention; and the utmoſt degree of peace we muſt expect to arrive at, does not conſiſt in being free from injuries and croſſes, but in bearing them with humility, and not being provoked to impatience, and uneaſy reſentments. And therefore, the more any man hath inured himſelf to ſuffer, and the better he entertains afflictions and wrongs, the more ſerene his mind will be. For this perſon hath gained a conqueſt over himſelf, is above the reach of detraction, hath the world at his command, is a friend of Chriſt, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

CHAP. IV.

Purity and ſincerity.

THERE are two wings by which a man ſoars above the world, ſincerity and purity. The former regards the intention, the latter the affections; that aſpires and aims at a likeneſs to God; this makes us really like him. We ſhould find no hardſhip in any good action, were but our minds free from all intemperate paſſion and deſire. And this perfection of freedom we ſhould not fail to attain, did we, in all our deſigns and undertakings, propoſe no other ends than obedience to the will of God, and promoting the good of our neighbour. Were but our minds thus fixed, and our intentions regulated, every thing would happily contribute to our edification. We ſhould ſtudy the volume of nature with profit, and every line in that large book would tend to our inſtruction. The ſmalleſt, and, in common eſteem, moſt deſpicable creature would repreſent, as in a glaſs, the goodneſs of God to us. And the reaſon why theſe things are ſeen with ſo unprofitable ſpeculation, is, becauſe our minds are not rightly diſpoſed, to draw thoſe advantagious and practical inferences, which moſt naturally reſult from them. For, as colours appear to our minds as they are painted in the eye, ſo the judgment men make of all outward objects, depends upon the condition of the mind; and we argue and pronounce of them differently, as we happen to be truly or falſely affected before-hand.

If there be ſuch a thing as true pleaſure in this world, the pure in heart enjoy it. And if there be a hell upon earth, it dwells in that man's breaſt, who hath a guilty and polluted conſcience. As iron is purged from the ruſt by fire, and becomes bright and new; ſo that zeal, by which we renounce the world, and turn entirely to God, takes off our filth and changes us into new men. The lukewarm and indifferent chriſtian grudges every thing he does, ſtops at every difficulty, and ſeeks his ſatisfaction in worldly and outward comforts. But if he warmly applies himſelf to ſubdue his paſſions, and reſolutely attempts the following God in his own way, the hardſhips which at firſt diſcouraged him, grow familiar, and leſſen upon his hands. All that God appoints him to do or ſuffer, becomes ſenſibly to him an *eaſy yoke, and a light burthen*, and *he finds peace and reſt to his ſoul.*

CHAP. V.

Know thyſelf.

IT is a very uſual thing with us, to have a mighty confidence in ourſelves; when alas! the want both of abilities and performance reproves our vanity and folly. For how ſmall is the proportion of our gifts, in compariſon of our own imaginations relating to them? And how defective our wiſdom and care to uſe and improve even that proportion we have? The light that is in us ſhines but dimly, and by our neglect we ſuffer it to go quite out. We are often blind, and not ſenſible of our infirmities; we ſtumble

ble and fall, and ſtill pretend we ſee; commit horrible ſins; aggravate our guilt by defending what we have done; nay, are ſometimes ſo wretchedly deluded, as even to endeavour to ſanctify our wickedneſs by a pretence of zeal. The ſmalleſt faults of others ſeldom eſcape our cenſure; and the much greater of our own as ſeldom fall under our obſervation. The burthens and hardſhips we put upon them, ſeem reaſonable, eaſy, and light; but the leaſt and moſt trivial uneaſineſs they create to us, we have a quick and painful ſenſe of, and cry out, *who can bear it?* Whereas, would we but take a right eſtimate of ourſelves, and judge our own actions as we ought to do, we ſhould find little leiſure, and leſs provocation, to pronounce ſeverely concerning our brethren.

Now this is the wiſe and truly ſpiritual man's method: he employs his thoughts at home, conſiders that there lies his proper buſineſs and care; and is tender of other people's failings, from a due and humble conſciouſneſs of his own. And whatever fond opinions we may cheriſh of our own virtue, religious and perfect we are not, nor ever can be, till we examine our own conſciences diligently, and leave all the reſt of the world to ſtand and fall by the judgment of their own maſter. Cenſoriouſneſs and chriſtian piety can never inhabit together. For this would bring us to a neglect of all things without us, and make us both forbear and deſpiſe all fore-judgings, but thoſe of God and our own conſciences. The mind, which does not converſe with it ſelf, is an idle wanderer, and all the learning in the world is fruitleſs and miſemploy'd, whilſt in the midſt of his boaſted knowledge, a man remains in profound ignorance of that, which in point both of duty and advantage he is moſt concerned to know. True peace and ſatisfaction of mind can only be acquired by doing our own buſineſs; and friendſhip and charity are beſt preſerved, by leaving off all impertinent and buſy curioſities, concerning the conduct and reputation of our neighbours.

The abandoning all worldly care, is a true argument of greater proficience in goodneſs. For, by eſteeming highly of any thing here below, our value for God and heaven is unavoidably diminiſhed and impaired. Let nothing therefore but God, and the things that be of God, ſeem great or grateful to thee, worthy deſiring, or rejoicing in. And all that imaginary comfort, which the creatures pretend to adminiſter, treat with the generous neglect and contempt that it deſerves. For a ſoul entirely devoted to the love of God, will naturally deſpiſe every thing in compariſon of him. And reaſon good there is why it ſhould do ſo, when we conſider, that every thing elſe is frail and of ſhort continuance, empty and unſatisfactory; but God alone eternal, omnipreſent, infinite in every excellence; and therefore he is the beſt, he is the only comfort and true joy of the ſoul, who alone can fill and exceed its largeſt deſires.

CHAP. VI.

The joy of a good conſcience.

THE glory and privilege of a good man conſiſts in the teſtimony of his own mind; for this is a perpetual feaſt, and will terminate in triumph. It ſets him above the power of fortune, and makes the ſharpeſt afflictions not only an exerciſe of his invincible patience, but a matter of undiſturbed joy to him. Whereas even proſperity it ſelf cannot procure eaſe and content to a guilty and ſelf-condemning breaſt. Would'ſt thou then enjoy a ſweet and uninterrupted tranquility? Keep all at peace within, and give thy own thoughts no cauſe to reproach thee. All the ſatisfaction we take or promiſe ourſelves, is vain and dangerous, except that only which proceeds from a true ſenſe of having done our duty. The men thou ſeeſt ſo gay, ſo ſeemingly full of delight, are galled and ſtung within; they have no inward, no true contentment; and notwithſtanding their moſt induſtrious purſuits of pleaſure, that ſentence of God is irreverſible, and the ſad effects of it cleave to their hearts, that *there is no peace to the wicked*, Iſa. lvii. 21. They may perhaps make mighty boaſts of their enjoyments, put on an air of happineſs, give out, that their pomp and greatneſs ſecure them from the aſſaults of miſery; but theſe are all deluſions, and ought not to incline our aſſent, or provoke our envy. We ſee not their inward tortures; nor are witneſſes of thoſe checks and terrors, which make retirement bitter and inſupportable, and haunt their cloſets and their beds: we diſcern not yet, but there is a time coming when we ſhall ſee an angry God breaking out upon them in fury; their mighty projects quaſhed and baffled, and all the happineſs they vainly boaſted of, vaniſh like a dream.

While therefore theſe men take a pride in their ſucceſſes and outward enjoyments, do thou with equal ſatisfaction entertain thy afflictions. This is not indeed to fleſh and blood an eaſy undertaking; but to a ſoul filled with grace and love, which knows and propoſes to it ſelf no other happineſs but God, nothing is impracticable, nothing too difficult. For what is this, but to rejoice in the fatherly care and affection of him, whoſe providence ordereth theſe ſufferings for thy good? The glory which we give or receive from one another, is very fickle and periſhing; it cannot laſt long, and while it does, ſome alloy of ſorrows will ever attend and damp it. The good man's glory ſtands upon ſtronger foundations; it riſes from within, and muſt endure ſo long as that innocence which creates it: nay, it muſt laſt as long as God himſelf; for his will carefully performed, his favour and approbation which follows that performance, are the ſolid baſes on which it ſtands: and theſe can never fail, ſo long as truth and juſtice continue impregnable. To him who aſpires after eternal glory and honour, that of this world is of very little conſideration. And theſe are ſo very different, ſo inconſiſtent, that the love and ſincere deſires of the one are beſt proved by a neglect and diſeſteem of the other. Nay, not only the future, but the preſent happineſs is beſt ſecured, by ſeeking the approbation of God alone; for nothing contributes more to an eaſy and quiet mind, than a diſregard of the praiſe, and deſpiſing the cenſures and reproaches of bad men.

A pure and quiet conſcience does above all things diſpoſe a man to reſt contented with his condition: and eſpecially, with regard to the opinion of the world, it is highly reaſonable he ſhould do ſo. For what is any one really the better, or the worſe, for what other people ſay of him? Their commendations add nothing to his virtue, nor does their diſpraiſe and ſcandal in the leaſt diminiſh it. The man is ſtill the ſame; what his own actions and the judgment of God make him. This is the ſtandard of our worth and happineſs; neither more nor leſs belongs to us, than will be found to do ſo at the laſt great account; and that will depend, not upon what we were ſaid or ſuppoſed to be, but upon what in very deed we were in this world. The more reſpect therefore we bear to the condition of our own minds, the leſs impreſſion will the characters and reports of men make upon us. For God ſeeth not as men ſee; they obſerve the face and outward appearance, but he ſearcheth and underſtands the heart. They look upon the action, and form a judgment from thence; he ſees our intentions, and condemns or acquits us according to our honeſty and ſincerity, or corrupt inclinations and wicked deſigns. And therefore a modeſt humble man makes it his conſtant care to be doing good, and to think meanly of his own performances. He ſeeks, nay, he feels no great matter of comfort, from any of the advantages which attend well-doing in this world; but conſiders whom he ſerves, and for whoſe ſake he does it, and chearfully relies upon *him* alone, for the praiſe and reward of that which beſt deſerves it. And when we are not ſollicitouſly concerned for the teſtimony and credit of men, then may we truly be ſaid to have reſigned ourſelves to God, and to depend upon him, with that ſtedfaſt and holy confidence which becomes us. *Not he that commendeth himſelf* (no, nor he whom others commend neither) *is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth*, 2 Cor. x. 18. And therefore a holy and ſpiritual man indeed, lays aſide, as much as may be, all concern with the world. He conſiders that God is the only perſon whom he ſhould labour to pleaſe; and while he is happy in his approbation, and the witneſs of a good conſcience, all outward accidents are conſidered, as things remote, and foreign to his main deſign; and ſuch as ought not much to affect him.

CHAP. VII.

Of loving Jeſus above all things.

BLeſſed is that man indeed, who conſtantly feels and reliſhes the love of Jeſus; who finds the ſweet of this love, and can even deſpiſe and hate himſelf for his ſaviour's ſake. For, tho' the love of ourſelves be the very voice of reaſon and nature, yet the ſame voice commands us too, to quit a leſs valuable friend for one that is better. And this exchange he hath made neceſſary to our obedience, who requires us, to love him only, above all things. And he alone is worthy of our love. For the objects of this world, which are too apt to engage our affections, are uncertain and deceitful; but Chriſt is faithful and eternal, and will not fail to return and reward our love. He that depends upon any temporal comfort, will one day be convinc'd of its frailty to his coſt, when he and it both periſh together; but Jeſus remaineth for ever. And as he cannot periſh himſelf, ſo neither will he ſuffer any to periſh, who depend upon *him*. Let *him* then be your hope, your joy, your love, whoſe friendſhip and whoſe power are everlaſting. Tho' all things forſake you, yet will not he; nay, all things elſe will certainly forſake you, but even then he will be all, and more than all the world to you.

Living and dying then, keep cloſe and ſtedfaſt to him, for he in life and death will be to you advantage. But then his friendſhip and conſtant protection depends upon this condition, that you admit no rival in competition with him. He will not accept divided affections, but expects to reign ſupreme and ſole lord of your hearts; and the only way of inviting him thither, is to caſt out all other inmates, and let him have the whole houſe to himſelf. And indeed, when we come to conſider and compute matters juſtly, whatever love or regard we have allowed to any thing but him, will be found in a manner perfectly loſt and thrown away. Do not therefore indulge a paſſion, which can turn to no account. Lean not upon a broken reed, which will not only let thee fall, but pierce thy arm too. And ſuch a reed is mortal man, *for all fleſh is graſs, and all the glory thereof flouriſheth as a flower of the field; the graſs withereth, and the flower fadeth*, 1 Pet. i. 24. And they who are enamour'd with its beauty, find how poor and tranſitory, how empty and deceitful a good they ſet their hearts upon. Wherever elſe we expect comfort, our hopes are ſoon blaſted, or wretchedly diſappointed: but when our thoughts and wiſhes center in Jeſus, we are ſure to find what we look for, ſure to obtain all that we did, more than what we could expect. Think not to find ſatisfaction in thy ſelf; for the better you underſtand yourſelf, the leſs cauſe you will find to love yourſelf; and the more you indulge this love, the greater and more certain will be your ruin. Seek then thy Lord and only Saviour; for he who hath Chriſt, poſſeſſes every thing worth poſſeſſing; and he who neglects him does himſelf more miſchief than all the enemies, nay, all this world, and all the powers of hell, could ever bring upon him.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Of intimate converſation, and friendſhip with JESUS.

WHILE Jeſus is preſent by his grace and comfort, nothing is hard to do, nothing grievous to ſuffer; but happineſs and perfect peace dwell and reign in my breaſt. But the moment he withdraws his chearing preſence, all my ſupports are loſt and gone, all my faculties diſabled, and every difficulty inſuperable, every croſs inſupportable. The uſual comforts of this world make no impreſſion, nor give any ſolid joy, while he continues ſilent; but let *him* ſpeak one ſingle word of conſolation to the ſoul, and ſhe is gay in the midſt of diſtreſſes. Thus *Mary* roſe immediately, and dried up her tears, upon the news of his approach, and the firſt call of her dear maſter. And happy ſure was ſhe, happy is every mortal in this vale of tears, whom Jeſus effectually calls: for whom he calls and commands to come to him, he calls from grief and mourning to true joy. How flat and inſipid, how harſh and unpleaſant is all we are, and all we have, without this heavenly comforter? How empty and deluding all thoſe wiſhes and deſires, which are placed upon any other object? They bid us infinitely to our loſs. A loſs greater and more irretrievable, than if we loſt the whole world. For cou'd we gain the whole world with the loſs of him, it were a fooliſh and moſt miſerable exchange. And what indeed is all the world without him? To be deprived of this one friend, is bitterer than the pangs of death: to enjoy and poſſeſs him, the only happineſs of life. His friendſhip is ſecurity more than ſufficient againſt a whole world of enemies; a treaſure above all the riches of the univerſe. He who finds this, hath more than both the *Indies*; and he who loſes it, loſes more than can be expreſs'd. But why do I ſay more? He loſes all: for this is poverty in it's extremity; nay, the only poverty, to loſe the only true riches.

So all-ſufficient, ſo delightful, ſo celeſtially ſweet, is the friendſhip and company of Jeſus! But every man is not qualified for ſo precious a bleſſing, for it requires great care, and ſkill, and ſpiritual wiſdom, to be fit for this enjoyment. Humility and charity muſt make and keep him ours. Piety and peace are the diſpoſitions he delights in. Sin, and paſſion, and worldly affections, will drive him away. And if he take his flight, where, wretched man, where wilt thou find a friend? Without a friend thou canſt not enjoy conſolation; and if he be not thy only friend, thou art left deſolate and forlorn. Conſider then, how miſerable thou makeſt thy ſelf, by placing thy confidence, or thy joy, in any other. For better were it far, that the whole world ſhould bend their utmoſt ſpight againſt thee, than this one friend be provoked to diſpleaſure. If therefore relations and acquaintance be dear, yet let none be ſo, in competition with thy God and Saviour. Remember, they are dear for *his* ſake, but he for his own. For this is the peculiar prerogative of Chriſt, that enemies as well as friends ſhould challenge a ſhare in thy affections upon his account. Thou art to forgive and love, to pity and pray for all mankind, becauſe *he* loves them all; and it ought to be the earneſt deſire of our hearts, that all may know, and be ſenſible of his love, and make the moſt ſuitable returns human nature is capable of, for ſuch wonderful goodneſs. But neither we nor any other perſon have a right to be loved for our own ſelves; for the foundation of love is excellence and goodneſs; and this is all from God. In him alone it dwells originally, inherently, independently; and what proportion ſoever any creature hath, is entirely derived from him, the emanation of that univerſal and inexhauſtible ſource. And therefore he alone hath right to command our love for his own excellence, becauſe all excellence is his; he alone is to be loved above all others, becauſe he neither hath, nor can have any equal. Covet not then the praiſe or love of men, for praiſe and love are peculiar to God only. Nor laviſhly diſpenſe theſe to others, but in thy ſelf, and all perſons of virtue and merit, praiſe, and admire, and love, the graces of Chriſt.

Bring to thy Lord a clean and upright ſpirit, free from the ſordid affections of this world; that thou may'ſt be entirely his, and ſolace thy ſelf with the delights of his converſation. But leave the world, and come to him, that thou canſt not do, without the prevention and aſſiſtance of his grace. This only can exalt thy deſires, and draw and ſecure thy heart with the cords of divine love. For man can *do all things through Chriſt that ſtrengthens him*; but if that ſuccour be withdrawn, he is blind and naked, deſtitute and weak, full of confuſion and torment; or rather, he is confuſion in the abſtract, weakneſs and impotence it ſelf. And if ſometime thou feel an inward ſcourge, let not thy melancholy thoughts deject or drive thee to deſpair. For ſpiritual comforts and joys are ſown in tears; and patience brings forth plentiful and perfect fruits of righteouſneſs and peace. If theſe ſorrows proceed from a reflection upon thy own ſins and infirmities, indulge an holy grief; and lament, as becomes a ſerious penitent, thy own unworthineſs, and former miſery. If adverſities ſent from the hand of God afflict thee, ſupport thy ſelf with the conſolations of a good conſcience; and be aſſured, that ſuffering ſo as may advance thy maſter's honour, will end in glory and advancement to thy ſelf. But conſider, that, in either caſe, the trouble cannot be long; for theſe black intervals of ſadneſs will as certainly, as naturally, be followed with inward peace and joy, as ſummer ſucceeds winter, and a ſtorm is huſhed into a profound calm.

CHAP. IX.

The diſconſolate ſtate.

WHEN all human comforts forſake us, if God vouchſafes to ſupply their place with ſpiritual and heavenly ones, which are infinitely better; we are not much to wonder, if the ſoul preſerves its temper, and bears up manfully under ſuch circumſtances. But when the world and God both frown, then to bear ſuch deſertion with patience, and be content to be deprived of all our hopes for his glory; then to acknowledge our unworthineſs, and not charge God fooliſhly, nor be partial to our ſuffering ſelves; this is virtue and reſignation indeed, the very excellence and perfection of an humble and ſubmiſſive mind. Who that conſiders, can forbear rejoycing, while the chearful light of God's countenance ſhines bright about him? What wretch is ſo unreaſonable to grudge his ſervice, when bounty and bleſſings reward his pains, and convince him that he does not ſerve God for nought? This is the happy ſeaſon, which every man deſires and may triumph in. Smooth and pleaſant is his paſſage, whom the grace of God conducts and carries through this troubleſome world. For who can think it ſtrange, that he ſhould not feel the weight of his burthen, who is ſtrengthen'd and ſupported by almighty power, and led through difficulties and dangers by the captain of his ſalvation?

It is natural for us to cling faſt about any thing that may give us eaſe; and hard for a man to diveſt himſelf of carnal appetites; ſo that, before our paſſions be effectually ſubdued, and our delight and hope fix'd entirely upon God, many and frequent conflicts muſt be undergone. And yet at no expence leſs than this, is our peace and quiet to be purchaſed. For ſo long as a man reſts upon his own ſtrength, he is eaſily diverted to worldly comforts, and taſtes little ſatisfaction but what ariſes from ſuch. But he whoſe ſoul is devoted to God and goodneſs, expects not his delight from ſenſual enjoyments, but finds a pleaſure in the ſeverer exerciſes of virtue and devotion, and even enjoys the hardſhips he undergoes for Chriſt's ſake.

If then God ſhowers down ſpiritual comforts from above, entertain the precious gifts with humility and thanks; and loſe not the effect and reward of grace, by ſuppoſing it your due, or valuing yourſelf upon it. Rejoice in the bleſſing; but temper that joy with gratitude. Let it not ſwell to inſolence and vanity, to cenſoriouſneſs or contempt of thy weaker brethren; but the more thou haſt received, the greater let thy modeſty be; and the more thy fear, thy diligence and watchfulneſs, that thou miſuſe not ſuch gracious liberality. For comfort and gladneſs will not laſt always; a cloud will come between and interrupt the chearful beams of the ſun of righteouſneſs. Temptations will have their turn too; and therefore, when theſe fall hard and heavy, let patience and humility, not hopeleſs deſpondency, be the effect of ſuch aſſaults. The greatneſs of thy ſufferings muſt inflame thy dependance, thy zeal, thy devotion; and fervent prayer is the proper weapon againſt the attacks of all ſpiritual adverſaries. For matters are not deſperate. He who took away his ſupports, only withdraws them for a ſeaſon, and to thoſe who ſeek them with holy perſeverance, will at a fit time, reſtore them again with advantage. This is an uſual thing with God. The prophets and ſaints of old have all advanced to their crowns, by the ſame thorny way of grief and deſertion. Nor may we ſuppoſe, that theſe diſconſolate intervals are the effects of God's anger and final abdication of us.

Obſerve how eminent an inſtance of theſe changes we have in *the man after God's own heart*. When the grace and favour of God was lifted up upon him, his mind was exalted proportionably: *in my proſperity, I ſaid, I ſhall never be caſt down, thou, Lord, of thy goodneſs, haſt made my hill ſo ſtrong*, Pſal. xxx. 6. When this favour was withdrawn, he conconfeſſes the conſequence of it, the deep and heavy impreſſion it made upon his ſpirits, *thou didſt turn thy face from me, and I was troubled*, ib. ver. 7. But yet this trouble, ſharp and ſenſible as it was, did not ſink him down into deſpair: his remedy was prayer, *then cried I unto thee, O Lord, and got me to my Lord right humbly*, ver. 8. And how ſucceſſful this application proved, himſelf declares, *the Lord heard me, and had mercy upon me; thou haſt turned my mourning into dancing, thou haſt put off my ſackcloth, and girded me with gladneſs*, ver. 10, 11. Now, if theſe ſorrows were the portion of thoſe bright patterns of piety; if God's dearly beloved children and faithfulleſt ſervants have not lived conſtantly under his propitious ſmiles; if men of ſo exalted virtue were yet variouſly affected, as they felt different diſpenſations of providence towards them; what are we poor, we weak, deſertleſs wretches, that we ſhould expect to be exempted from troubles? What is our zeal in compariſon of theirs, that we ſhould hope to have it always warm, always on the wing? What have we done to confine the kindly influences of that ſpirit, and ſecure them conſtant to ourſelves, which even to thoſe that uſe and improve it beſt, *goes and comes, and blows only where and when it liſteth?* John iii. 8. And therefore *Job* takes notice of it, as an event common to all mankind, that God does not ſo magnify, or ſet his heart upon any one among them, but that *he viſits him every morning, and tries him every moment*, Job vii. 17, 18.

Where therefore can we ſafely place our truſt, except in the grace and mercy of God only? All other comforters are miſerable. The company and exhortation of religious men, the tender and affectionate advice of dear and faithful friends, the entertainment of good books, the moving ſtrains of pious eloquence, the heavenly raptures of pſalms and hymns, all theſe adminiſter but very poor and imperfect relief, to aſſwage the anguiſh of our minds, or but ſo much as to divert and deceive our pain; if God withdraws his conſolations, and leaves us to the deſolate condition of merely human helps. Then, as our laſt and beſt refuge, we muſt fly to God; humble ourſelves under his mighty hand; ſubmit to what he lays upon us; acknowledge his goodneſs even in our afflictions; and be content to ſuffer ſtill, ſo long as he ſees fit; for he will not ſee fit to continue his diſpleaſure for ever, but will revive the contrite, and exalt the humble in due ſeaſon.

I never yet, to the beſt of my remembrance, met with any remarkable good man, who had not, at ſome time or other, fallen into theſe diſquietudes; and languiſhed under the apprehenſion of God's diſpleaſure, or the abatement of his own zeal. Nor was it ever deſigned, that any man in this life ſhould arrive at ſo exalted a ſtate of holineſs, and abſolute ſafety, as not to be ſometime tempted. Though this happens at very different times: for ſome have their trials in the beginning of their converſion, which are reſerved for others to their latter and more perfect days. It ſeems, the ſublime and rapturous contemplations of God, are a bleſſing too precious for thoſe, who have not firſt endured ſome trouble of mind, to qualify them for ſo excellent a reward. Well then may we rejoice in theſe temptations, which are ordained as certain forerunners of more abundant grace, and ſigns of thoſe unſpeakable conſolations and delights, which are reſerved for them that have approved themſelves faithful. For not to him that is excuſed from fighting, but *to him that overcometh* by ſtriving courageouſly, and endureth to the end, *will I give to eat of the tree of life*, Rev. ii. 7.

Moſt wiſely therefore are theſe changes of proſperity and adverſity appointed for the improvement of our piety and virtue. Were our troubles without intermiſſion, no fleſh could be ſaved; and therefore God ſoftens and rewards them with inward and heavenly comforts, that ſo, aſſiſted by his grace, and encouraged by his favour, we may be able to bear up againſt our ſharpeſt conflicts. But, were that grace and favour conſtant too, we ſhould be immoderately exalted with our performances, and impute the bleſſings of God too often to our own merit. And therefore the returns of affliction, and ſpiritual deſertion, are convenient, to prevent or check our pride. They ſhew us, that how highly ſoever we may value ourſelves, yet we are not ſo perfect, but that we deſerve to ſuffer; and the good we receive, we receive not of debt, but of bounty and free grace. Miſtake not, O man! the devil never ſleeps; he always watches for an opportunity to aſſault, and work thee miſchief. The fleſh is not utterly dead, nor its appetites and paſſions ſo totally extinct, but that every freſh object may awaken them into luſt. Be thou therefore awake too, and prepare every day for ſome new conflict: ſpeak not peace to thy ſelf, when beſet on every ſide with numerous and reſtleſs enemies; for wretched is thy caſe, if their violence be ſuffered to bear thee down, or their ſubtle and wakeful malice tempt thee to ſin.

CHAP. X.

Thankfulneſs for God's mercies.

MAN is born to trouble as the ſparks fly upward, Job v. 7. and doſt thou refuſe the conditions of nature, by hoping to be exempted from labour and ſuffering? Conſider this, and apply thy ſelf ſtrenuouſly to patience, as a moſt neceſſary virtue;

and learn to bear the croſs, as the main buſineſs thou art created for. For this will much better become a ſinful creature, than to depend upon comforts, which thou deſerveſt not, and pleaſures which belong not to thee. Could even the worldly-minded be ſecure of ſpiritual joys without interruption, he could not, in agreement with his own principle, but be paſſionately fond of them, as yielding more ſubſtantial ſatisfaction, than all external and ſenſual delight. For what compariſon can there be between thoſe pleaſures, which are attended with ſhame or deceit, and thoſe which are ſolid and durable, void of reproach and indecency, the fruits of virtue, and the ſpecial gift of God to chaſte and heavenly ſouls? This then were *Epicuriſm* indeed, were this to be attained and preſerved by any the moſt aſſiduous application. But that which renders even theſe joys leſs ſenſible, and leſs eagerly deſired, is, that they are the free gift of God, who both diſpenſes and withdraws them as himſelf judges proper, and frequently ſuſpends the happineſs they bring, by ſtrong and ſevere trials. For we are in a ſtate of continual diſcipline and warfare, and our conflicts muſt return very thick upon us, ſo long as we remain in ſuch a ſtate.

Nor are theſe difficulties from the malice of our enemies only, but we ourſelves contribute to our own miſery, and hinder the more liberal communications of divine grace and comfort, by affecting a miſtaken freedom, and extravagant conceits of our own ſtrength and goodneſs. The bounty of God is admirable, who ſupports us with the inward enjoyments of his ſpirit; but the folly of man is prodigious, who does not diſcern, and thankfully acknowledge,

ledge, that all his power to do well is imparted by a higher hand. If then the gifts of heaven are diſtributed to us more ſparingly than we wiſh or expect, we leſſen their proportions, by not being duly qualified to receive them: and qualify'd we cannot be, while ungrateful to the author, and negligent to improve all we receive to the giver's praiſe and honour. For he who hath and uſeth grace aright, does by that very act incline God to beſtow more. And from the proud unthankful neglecters of the favour, even what they had is taken away, and added to the portion of the humble and diligent; thoſe who are duly ſenſible, from whom, and to what purpoſes, they have it.

If I might be allowed to chuſe my own lot, I ſhould think it much more preferable to want my ſpiritual comforts, than to abound in theſe at the expence of my humility. No, let a penitent and contrite ſpirit always be my portion, and may I ever ſo be the favourite of heaven, as never to forget that I am chief of ſinners. Knowledge in the ſublime and glorious myſteries of the chriſtian faith, and raviſhing contemplations of God and a future ſtate, are moſt deſirable advantages; but ſtill I prefer *charity which edifieth*, 1 Cor. viii. 1. before the higheſt intellectual perfections of that *knowledge which puffeth up*. For every thing which is high, is not therefore holy. Many meats are agreeable to the palate, which are not conducive to health; and thoſe gifts, which are firſt in our eſteem, do not always recommend us moſt to God. Thoſe ſpiritual advantages are certainly beſt for us, which increaſe our modeſty, and awaken our caution, and diſpoſe us, to ſuſpect, and deny ourſelves. And therefore it is an argument of wiſdom in God, to recal his gifts ſometimes; as well as of his goodneſs, to impart them at others; that by the loſs of what we had, we may experimentally find out our own weakneſs; confeſs and feel our wants; and know to whom the whole glory of all that is excellent in us, does of right appertain. Deal juſtly then in this matter; *render to God the things that are God's*, and take to thy ſelf what is properly thy own: to him, the thanks for his graces, nay, for the very power of uſing them aright; to thyſelf, the ſhame and condemnation of having uſed them no better: and know, that his is the honour for all thou haſt done well, thine only the blame and juſt puniſhment for all thou haſt done amiſs.

Sit down in the loweſt place, and then ſhalt thou with honour be advanced to the higheſt; for the higher the building, the deeper muſt the foundation be laid, *Luke* xiv. The higheſt in God's eſteem are meaneſt in their own; and their excellence conſiſts in the meekneſs and truth, not in the pomp and oſtentation of piety, which affects to be ſeen and admir'd. The repoſing our hope and truſt in God alone is the moſt effectual prevention of vanity and inſolence; and aſcribing to him all our virtues and attainments, is inconſiſtent with coveting the applauſe of men. For ſuch perſons are concerned to approve their actions to God only; and labour to advance his glory, as the chief and only thing, which deſerves to be magnified in all that is pious and commendable, in themſelves and every good man.

Receive then a little with due gratitude, and thou ſhalt obtain more. The gifts, which others eſteem meaneſt and moſt contemptible, conſider as the gifts of God, and let this raiſe their value in thy mind. For indeed every thing ought to be eſteemed, which is a mark of his favour, who is the ſupreme Lord of all. Even ſtripes and puniſhments from *his* hands ſhouldbe, not only ſubmitted to patiently, but received thankfully; ſince his rod is intended for our good, and no diſpenſation of his providence is without its profitable and wiſe deſign. If then thou valueſt the grace of God, and deſireſt to keep it, be thankful when he gives; be reſigned and patient when he takes away; pray fervently and frequently for the returns of his favour, and let not thy own pride or negligence provoke him to withdraw it.

CHAP. XI.

Of loving Chriſt in affliction.

MANY we find poſſeſs'd with ſtrong deſires of Chriſt's heavenly kingdom, and eager of reigning with him there; but few, who are in love with his croſs, and content to ſuffer for his ſake upon earth. The graces and ſweet conſolations of his ſpirit allure and draw us, but afflictions drive us away from him. When he invites men to ſit down at his table, the gueſts come crowding in apace; but if he call us after him into the wilderneſs, to faſt and pray with him; he calls in vain, and goes unattended. The breaking of bread is what all of us like, but the drinking of his bitter cup we are ſhamefully averſe to. We read the hiſtory of his life, and peruſe his miracles with reverence and delight, for theſe were full of mercy and relief to wretched men; but when he comes to the tragical circumſtances of his dolorous paſſion, and bitter death, we either ſhut our books, or read the melancholy ſtory with coldneſs and indifference: loath to perſuade ourſelves, that in *this part he hath left us an example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps*, 1 Pet. ii. 21. Such was the behaviour, not of the multitudes only, but of his own diſciples too, who throng'd into his Hoſanna's and his preaching; but when he was apprehended, and treated as a malefactor, all *forſook him and fled*, Matt. xxi. John xviii. And ſuch is the behaviour of all thoſe chriſtians ſtill, who ſerve him chearfully, while things go well with them, and magnify his mercy, ſo long as they taſte his goodneſs, but withdraw when afflictions approach, and if he hide the brightneſs of his face, fall into wretched dejections and deſpondency of mind, and are provoked to impatience and murmuring, and grievous complaints.

Methinks we might find motives and engagements, many and powerful, which ſhould unite our ſouls and affections to the bleſſed *Jeſus*, from what he is in himſelf, not from what he is to us; without any reſpect to our own private intereſt, and the preſent advantages we receive from him. This would confirm and root us faſt in love, and praiſe, and gratitude; beyond the power of outward calamities, or inward anxieties of mind, to ſhake and divert us. Then ſhould we, with theſe holy men, even think it good, and thank God that we have been in trouble, and though he *ſhould ſlay us*, yet ſhould we ſtill delight and *truſt in him.*

O! could we once but get above this mercenary diſpoſition of propoſing intereſt and gain in all we do, and love our bleſſed Lord for his own ſake, how profitable would be the fruits of ſo generous a principle?

And indeed, how can we profeſs to love him, when we only love ourſelves; and pay obedience to his commands not out of regard to *his* authority and *our* obligations, nor from a deſire to pleaſe him, but purely to promote our own worldly intereſt? For where, among the many millions who profeſs to be zealous chriſtians, where is the man that would be content to ſerve God, as his maker and rightful Lord, had he no expectation of reward from him? Nay, who almoſt is ſo ſpiritually refined, as that poverty of ſpirit recommended and bleſſed by our Saviour, requires we ſhould be, that is, reſigned as to all temporal enjoyments, and well ſatisfied to perſevere in our duty, and not to think our maſter ſevere, though he ſhould even totally deprive us of all thoſe comforts, which are uſually the encouragements to piety and virtue? This is a temper rarely to be met with; ſuch a generoſity and greatneſs of ſpirit, as crowns and kingdoms, nay, the whole world were wiſely given in exchange for. For this is the perfection of love; a virtue ſo exalted, that no other part of religion is to be named with it. A man may beſtow all his wealth upon the poor, and be never the better. He may chaſtiſe and mortify his fleſh and ſenſual appetite, with all the ſeverities of the moſt exemplary penitence, and yet this is but a low and little excellence in compariſon to the whole duty of a chriſtian. He may attain to the higheſt and cleareſt knowledge in the myſteries of religion, but ſtill he is infinitely ſhort. His virtues may be bright and exemplary, his devotion fervent and conſtant, his meditations raviſhing and divine: all theſe are valuable gifts; but there is ſtill one excellence behind, more valuable, more neceſſary than all the reſt; and that is, being able, after having renounced all the world beſides, to renounce himſelf for the ſake of his Lord; to devote all he is or can do, ſo entirely to his ſervice, as to be content with every thing which falls to his lot; to ſtudy his will, his pleaſure, his glory in all things, and to conſult his own in nothing: and when he hath faithfully and diligently perform'd all, which he knew it became, and was expected from him to do, to eſteem all this of no conſideration, and account that he hath done nothing.

Others, queſtionleſs, will have quite different notions of him. They will ſee and admire, publiſh and extol his virtues, but ſtill their commendations, tho' never ſo profuſe, never ſo juſt, will not have any influence over his judgment, nor tempt him to vary one whit from that opinion, which truth it ſelf hath directed us to in this caſe, *when ye have done all that is commanded you, ſay, we are unprofitable ſervants*, Luke xvii. He will not think that complaint of the prophet beneath him, *I am poor and deſolate*, Pſ. xxv. when yet in truth among mortal men none is more wealthy, none more happy, none greater and more powerful than he, who in a true chriſtian humility, thinks himſelf moſt helpleſs, moſt impotent, moſt miſerable. In a word, none more honourable in God's eyes, than he who is moſt vile and deſpicable in his own.

CHAP. XII.

The reaſonableneſs of taking up our croſs.

WHEN Jeſus thus deſcribes the condition of our being owned for his, *if any man will be my diſciple, let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and follow me*, Matt. xvi. the generality of men are apt to cry out with thoſe in the goſpel upon another occaſion, *this is a hard ſaying, and who can bear it?* John vi. But, oh! that ſuch would ſeriouſly conſider, how infinitely more terrible and inſupportable that ſentence will be, which their angry judge ſhall pronounce in thunder at the laſt day; and how thoſe ears, which are too ſoft and tender to bear this, will then be able to endure, a *go ye curſed into everlaſting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* Ah! how abſurd, how ſenſeleſs is it, not to be valiant in God's cauſe at preſent, and chearfully embrace a command, which, though attended with ſome ſhort uneaſineſs now, ſhould yet be welcome to us, becauſe it will give us boldneſs in the great day of tryal; and, by impoſing ſome ſhort and very tolerable pains, be our ſecurity againſt torments inſupportable and everlaſting? For when our Lord ſhall come to judge the world with terrible pomp, the croſs ſhall be diſplayed, and lifted high in heaven. This thing now ſo much abhorred, ſo full of ſhame, ſhall then be a banner of triumph; and they who have fought under it here, and followed the crucified captain of their ſalvation, in a life of humility and ſufferings, ſhall fly to it as their proper ſtandard, and enter with their glorious leader into his joy and kingdom, there to be happy for ever.

Why ſhould we then ſtumble at that croſs, which leads directly to a crown? Why thus obſtruct our own happineſs, by refuſing that which heals our ſpiritual infirmities, guards us againſt our worſt enemies, fills us with heavenly comforts, brightens our virtues, and ſupports us with aſſured hopes of inexpreſſible and everlaſting bliſs? Remember thy great maſter and example, bearing his croſs, dying upon his croſs, that thou hereafter mighteſt not diſdain to bear it for thine own advantage, when he for thy ſake hath born it before thee. *For if we dye with him, we ſhall alſo live with him; if we ſuffer with him, we ſhall alſo reign with him; but if we deny him*, and are aſhamed of this puniſhment, he will alſo *deny and be aſhamed of us*, 2 Tim. ii. Mark viii. and ſhut us out of his glory.

Conſider that thy all depends upon ſuffering and dying. This is the ſum of thy duty, this the fountain of thy happineſs. God hath ordained no other way of bringing us to himſelf, except that one of *dying daily*; and *crucifying the fleſh with its affections and luſts*. In this all the diſpenſations of providence conſpire; for, what courſe ſoever you take, which way ſoever you turn, how prudently ſoever you contrive, the croſs is ſure to meet you every where. And that which, willingly embraced, would prove your ſafety and virtue, is ſure to be your portion, whether you will or not. Bodily ſickneſs and pain, diſappointments and worldly loſſes, anguiſh and perplexity of heart, diſcomfort and deſertions from God, injuries and provocations from men, and which is worſe than all, diſpleaſure and diſcontent at yourſelf; one or more of theſe will be perpetually exerciſing your patience; and ſo long as God ſees fit to continue you in this ſtate of mortality and diſcipline, 'tis vain to hope you ſhall be exempted from them.

For God, in his great wiſdom and goodneſs, appoints us to tribulation; and clouds, or withdraws our preſent comforts, that we may learn to love and value him and heaven the more, to acknowledge our dependance upon his bounty, be made ſenſible of our own weakneſs, and grow wiſer and more humble by afflictions. By theſe we are taught to underſtand and value the ſufferings of Chriſt, of which we ſhould have but a very cold and imperfect idea, did not our own experience teach us what it is to ſuffer. And the greater conformity to his image our tryals work us up to, the clearer and more affecting ſenſe we have of his miraculous condeſcenſion. Avoid the croſs then we cannot, becauſe we cannot run away from ourſelves, nor ceaſe to be men; and therefore what we cannot avoid, we muſt make it our endeavour patiently to endure, and render that which would otherwiſe be our torment, a means of virtue here, and of glory hereafter.

Now this is ſtill in our own power: for they who ſuſtain their croſs, ſhall likewiſe be ſuſtained by it in return, and all their pains amply rewarded in their proper time and place. But this life is not that time and place; and therefore we muſt be content to labour now, and expect our recompence hereafter. But if we bear with murmuring and grudging, what we muſt bear, we do but gall our ſhoulders with the yoke, and render that a heavy unprofitable load, which might be fruitful and glorious. If we caſt off one burthen, we are forthwith purſued and oppreſſed by another; and, inſtead of affliction, full of hope and humility, draw upon ourſelves that moſt intolerable of all burthens, guilt and deſpair.

Why ſhould you entertain an imagination ſo vain, as that of being made an exception to all mankind? Produce me, if you can, one ſingle inſtance in the whole catalogue of glorified ſaints, who paſſed this vale of tears without his portion of miſery. Even Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, our great Lord, tho' God as well as man, yet lived a life of trouble; and none was ever ſo truly a *man of ſorrows*, or ſo intimately *acquainted with grief*, Iſaiah liii. Himſelf hath told us, that *it behoved him thus to ſuffer, and to riſe again the third day, and ſo to enter into his glory*, Luke xxiv.

And if this was the way neceſſary for Chriſt himſelf to aſcend to the Throne of God, we muſt not preſume to hope for a ſmooth and eaſy paſſage thither. His whole life was little elſe but one continued croſs, a chain of ſufferings drawn out to the length of ſo many years. And do we, who profeſs to tread in his ſteps, expect a life of ſoftneſs and eaſe, and pleaſure? No, no, fond man! look for nothing but trouble. This thou may'ſt depend upon, for it will never diſappoint thee. It is not only the condition of thy happineſs as a chriſtian, but thy certain ſettlement and portion as a man. For mortality is beſet on every ſide with croſſes, and expoſed to ſuffering every moment. And though theſe be both the puniſhment and the remedy for ſin, yet may we not imagine that they, who are moſt careful to preſerve themſelves from ſinning, are in the ſame proportion excuſed from ſuffering. For frequently the beſt men undergo the ſevereſt Tryals; and the better they are, the tenderer and more painful ſenſe they have of them. For the fervent love and deſire of a better country, their proper and eternal home, renders the preſent pilgrimage and baniſhment more tireſome and afflicting.

But yet theſe calamities are no juſt reflection upon the wiſdom and goodneſs of almighty God; for as he appoints the rod in his mercy, ſo does he likewiſe furniſh his ſervants with ſuitable conſolations and ſupports, proportioned to their circumſtances. And they, who ſubmit to the croſs as becomes them, reap large and glorious fruits by ſowing in tears. The Burthen of their miſeries is lightned, by caſting their care, and repoſing their truſt, upon one who hath a tender care for them. And the more the outward man is weaken'd and oppreſs'd, the greater ſtrength and grace they feel in the inner man. Nay, ſuch is their deſire, ſuch the ſatisfaction of being conformed to the image of Chriſt, that good men frequently would not ſo much as wiſh to be freed from thoſe miſeries, in which the leſs diſcerning part of the world are apt to think the very extremity of unhappineſs conſiſts. For theſe better inſtructed ſouls have a farther proſpect, and can ſoften all their diſtreſſes by this conſideration; that the more they endure, the purer and more refined they are from ſin, and the more acceptable and dear they become to God. 'Tis true, this conſideration is not the effect of any ſtrength or wiſdom merely human, but the ſole product of divine grace. This ſometimes gains ſo abſolute a conqueſt over natural inclinations, and exalts fleſh and ſenſe to ſo high a degree of reſignation and perfection, that what, as men we cannot but refuſe, and have violent averſions to, as chriſtians we contentedly embrace, and are entirely ſatisfied with.

When therefore we feel in ourſelves, or obſerve in others, a zeal ſo powerful, ſo noble, as not only to bear, but even to love and delight in the croſs; when we conquer and bring into abſolute ſubjection theſe bodies, and their appetites, by a long painful courſe of rigorous and voluntary ſeverities; when we induſtriouſly avoid honours and wealth, bear injuries and infamy contentedly, deſpiſe ourſelves, and even delight to be deſpiſed by others; when we entertain the ſharpeſt misfortunes with conſtancy and temper, and are ſo perfectly dead to the world, as no longer ſo much as to deſire thoſe enjoyments and advantages, which recommend and ſweeten life to mankind; do not ſuppoſe that this is the work, or falls within the compaſs of man; for they who depend upon their natural powers, or their own moſt exquiſite philoſophy, can never riſe ſo high, nor thus abſtract their minds from mere matter and ſenſe. No principle, but that of holy-truſt and faith in God, is capable of acquiring ſuch divine operations. This ſtrength and reſolution comes from heaven. No force leſs than almighty can beat down the fleſh, the world, and the devil under our feet; none defeat and ſet us above the horrors and aſſaults of his malice and temptations; leſs than his, who vanquiſh'd this old ſerpent upon the croſs, and by ſo doing, ſanctified our croſs to us too.

Call up then all thy powers of reaſon and religion; Remember whom thou haſt engaged to follow, and with all the reſolute fidelity due to thy vows and obedience, ſet thy ſelf manfully to take up his croſs, who ſubmitted to die upon a croſs for thy ſalvation. Prepare and diſpoſe thy heart, that no affliction may over-bear thee by ſurprize; but, conſidering what infinite variety of troubles incompaſs thee, and wait thee every where, let none have the advantage of finding thee unprovided: were there a poſſibility of eſcaping, we might then be allowed to contrive methods of declining our miſeries: but ſince they cannot be ſhifted off, the only remedy we have left againſt them, is readineſs to ſuffer. Conſider it is thy Lord's Cup, and that he drank the very bittereſt dregs of it; remember it is he who gives it; and that he therefore gives it, that thou may'ſt be partaker of his ſufferings, in order to be made a more worthy partaker of his glories. 'Tis true, he was ſtrengthened in his agonies by an angel, ſent from above, nor ſhalt thou want ſupports proper for thy condition, *Luke* xxii. But what theſe are, or in what meaſures fit to be imparted, our Lord himſelf knows beſt; and to his wiſe diſpoſal we muſt wholly leave it. But all we have to do ourſelves, is to ſecure an humble and patient diſpoſition. And this we ſhould find leſs difficulty in, would we but follow the pattern our Saviour hath left, of *enduring the croſs, and deſpiſing the ſhame, for the glory ſet before him*, Heb. xii. And what can recommend our ſuffering, what confirm our patience more, than to conſider, that *theſe light afflictions, which are but for a moment, ſhall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?* That glory, in compariſon of which they are not worthy ſo much as to be named. A glory ſo exceeding, that if all the tribulations incident to all mankind were heaped upon one ſingle perſon; yet even ſo the recompence is infinitely above what ſuch a ſuffering could pretend to deſerve; and heaven would be cheap and prudently bought, even at this vaſt expence.

Eſteem thy ſelf then happy indeed, when thou canſt enjoy thy ſorrows, and find a ſenſible ſatisfaction in ſuffering for Chriſt; for this is in a manner to attain heaven upon earth. A happineſs, which no man can ever arrive at, ſo long as adverſities bring pain, and diſcontent, and ſad oppreſſions of ſpirit; for the ſolicitude, and conſtant labour to avoid calamities, will be ſure to produce perpetual diſquietude.

Suffering and dying are not only neceſſary incumbrances upon us, but the beſt and moſt authentick inſtances of our virtue and obedience. It is the buſineſs and perfection of a chriſtian to do thus daily; and they, who in good earneſt apply themſelves to it, will quickly find their affections raiſed, their ſtrength increaſed, their comfort and inward peace wonderfully advanced. St. *Paul* was wrapt up into the third heaven, yet did not he boaſt ſo much of this, as of his afflictions, 2 *Cor.* xii. And wherein the uncommon privileges of this eſpecial favourite conſiſted, we learn from the mouth of Chriſt himſelf, when he ſays, *I will ſhew him how great things he muſt ſuffer for my name's ſake.* Suppoſe then, you could be admitted to his extaſies and revelations, yet even theſe, 'tis plain from his example, would not exempt you from trouble and ſufferings; for the more you are loved, and the more vehemently you love, and are deſirous to pleaſe your Saviour, the greater proofs of this kind you muſt expect to give.

Conſider thoſe apoſtles, who went away from their perſecutors, *rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to ſuffer for the ſake of Chriſt*, Acts v. And learn from thence to covet and value the honour and dignity of enduring pain and poverty, perſecution and reproach. For this would ſeem no mean promotion, but a favour reſerved for thoſe whom God is kindeſt to; did we but look back upon the gain it brings to ourſelves, the glory to our maker, the joy to ſaints and angels, and the benefit to our brethren, who ſhall obſerve, and be encouraged by our ſtedfaſtneſs, and patience, and holy perſeverance. Nay, even the wicked and carnal minded will be moved by ſuch examples. For there is ſo manifeſt a coherence and decency, in ſubmitting to any adverſities which it ſhall pleaſe God to lay upon us, that even they who have not the heart to imitate, yet will not be able to forbear applauding and admiring the pattern we ſet them.

Would we indeed weigh things in a juſt balance, 'tis very unreaſonable we ſhould decline ſuffering for Chriſt, when it is ſo very apparent, that we are well content to undergo much ſeverer hardſhips for the world, than any he thinks fit to call us to. And ſhall humour, or paſſion, or temporal intereſt be ſuffered to prevail upon us more powerfully than duty? Eſpecially, when that duty promotes an infinitely better intereſt; and the more we are mortified to ourſelves and the world, the nobler advances we make towards God and life everlaſting? Theſe are refined privileges, for which no man is qualify'd till he be firſt purified in the furnace of adverſity; nor can ſpiritual and divine graces dwell in a ſoul, till the droſs of earth and ſenſual appetites be firſt purged off. Aſſure your ſelf, that ſuffering for, and in obedience to Chriſt, is not only the moſt acceptable thing to God, but really advantageous for your ſelf, and that which contributes moſt to the ſoul's health of any thing that can happen in the preſent ſtate. And, would the prejudices fleſh and blood lie under, ſuffer us to diſcern and conſider matters impartially; this would be firſt in our wiſhes, and preferred before all the outward proſperity, or inward ſatisfactions, this world can give. For who would not be ambitious of reſembling our Lord, and his moſt eminent ſaints? Who is ſo blind, as not to ſee, that the thing, in which they diſtinguiſh'd their merit, was not the larger degree of their revelations, or the pleaſures they enjoy'd, but the number and extremity of their afflictions? And we may be very certain, that if Chriſt had known any better way to heaven, than by croſſes and patience, he would both have choſen it himſelf, and recommended it to his faithfulleſt ſervants, and deareſt friends. But ſince his own example, and his conſtant directions declare, that *if any man will come to him, he muſt deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and follow him*, Luke xiv. it is but folly and loſt labour to think of any other method. For laying aſide all human evaſions, this will be the ſum and concluſion of the whole matter, that, *thro' much tribulation we muſt enter into the kingdom of God*, Acts xiv.

OF THE
IMITATION
OF
JESUS CHRIST.

The THIRD BOOK.

Digeſted into Conferences between *CHRIST* and the ſoul of his diſciple.

CHAP. I.

The happineſs of ſuch a converſation.

DISCIPLE.

I *WILL hear what the Lord God will ſay concerning me*; Pſal. lxxxv. 8. For bleſſed is the ſoul, which hears the Lord ſpeaking, and feels the tranſporting comforts of his gracious words. Bleſſed are the ears, which, with ardent attention, drink in the ſoft and gentle whiſpers of his ſpirit; and continue obſtinately deaf to the treacherous inſinuations of this deluding world. And doubly bleſ-

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ſed are they, who hear the ſound of truth, not only in the outward adminiſtrations of the word, but by the inward and familiar communications and motions of infuſed grace. Bleſſed thoſe eyes, which are ſhut to all the alluring objects of the world, and conſtantly wakeful and open to the affairs of the ſoul, and turned inward upon one's ſelf. Bleſſed are they whoſe ſharper ſight enters deep, and pierces into the ſecret and ſublime myſteries of heavenly truth; purified and prepared by ſpiritual meditations, and daily exerciſe of holy duties. Bleſſed indeed are they, who diſengage themſelves from all worldly incumbrances, and thereby gain leiſure and opportunities for attending continually upon God alone.

Conſider this, my ſoul, and ſhake off ſenſual deſires, which muſt be firſt abandoned, before thou canſt liſten with due reverence and attention to thoſe things, which the Lord thy God will ſpeak. And, O! what comfortable words are thoſe, *I am thy peace, thy life, thy ſalvation, and exceeding great reward*, John xiv. Gen. xvii. *Come unto me, thou that art weary and heavy laden, and thou ſhalt find reſt unto thy ſoul*, Matt. xi. *Set thy affections on things above, and not on things on the earth*, Coloſſ. iii. *For the things that are ſeen are temporal, but the things that are not ſeen are eternal*, 2 Cor. iv. What are all things here below, but dangerous and empty deluſions? And what could it profit a man to gain, though it were all the creatures, if he be forſaken and caſt off by the creator? In him alone is pleaſure, and Joy, and Glory. Therefore abandon thoſe cheating ſhadows, and embrace the only ſubſtantial good; bid a final adieu to the deceits of the world, and place all thy love and endeavours upon thy God;

for in his ſervice and acceptance thou ſhalt attain the end of thy deſires, the fruit of thy labours, ſolid ſatisfaction and true happineſs.

CHAP. II.

God is in the ſmall ſtill voice.

DISCIPLE.

SPEAK, *Lord, for thy ſervant heareth*, 1 Sam. iii. *Behold, I am thy ſervant, and the ſon of thy handmaid; O give me underſtanding, that I may learn thy commandments*, Pſal. cxix. Incline my ſoul to the words of thy mouth, which *drop down as the rain upon the tender herb, and diſtil gently, like dew upon the graſs*, Deut. xxxii. The *Iſraelites* indeed beſought *Moſes* heretofore, *Speak thou unto us, and we will hear, but let not God ſpeak unto us, leſt we die*, Exod. xx. 19. But let it not be done unto me, my God, I rather chuſe to make my humble petition in the prophet *Samuel*'s form; *Speak, Lord; for thy ſervant heareth.* Let not *Moſes*, nor any of the prophets be my only inſtructor, but do thou thy ſelf alſo vouchſafe to teach me by thy ſelf. For thou art the fountain of all their light and knowledge. They could not utter truth without thy inſpiration and heavenly direction; but thou art eſſential wiſdom and truth, and canſt communicate thy ſelf effectually to my ſoul.

Their words, alas, were air and empty ſound, when not inſpired by thee, but thine alone are ſpirit and life. Their expreſſions may be proper, their arguments moving, but unleſs thou break ſilence, my ſoul will ſtill continue deaf and inſenſible. They deliver the words, but thou art the interpreter, and letteſt me into the true and hidden ſenſe of their moſt abſtruſe oracles. Their books are ſealed, and only thy hand can open and explain them. From them we receive the command, but only from thee the diſpoſition to obey, and the whole power of performing it. They ſhew the way, but thou imparteſt ſtrength to walk therein; all they can do, is ſtill remote and without us. Thou only entreſt into the ſoul, and, by a ſecret conveyance, putt'ſt truth in the inward parts. *Paul may plant, and Apollos water*, 1 Cor. iii. but except thou be pleaſed *to give the increaſe, the word will return unto thee void, and accompliſh* no part of *the end, whereto thou ſenteſt it.* The voice of their cry pierces our ears; but the knowing what they cry, and the impreſſion upon our hearts, is thy peculiar gift.

Therefore, I cannot but again ſupplicate thy grace and mercy, and beg, that *Moſes* may not ſpeak to me, but thou, my Lord, my God, the only and eternal truth, leſt I die; not by the terrors of thy thundring voice, but by the effectual communications of thy will. For if I be inſtructed and admoniſhed by the outward miniſtration only, and be not inwardly diſpoſed, and zealouſly affected to obedience, the advantages of inſtruction will but aggravate my condemnation. For this is the dreadful conſequence of the word *preached not profiting, when it is not mixed with faith in them that hear it*, Heb. iv. And mixed with faith thou knoweſt it cannot be, except ſeconded and enforced by the voice of thy ſpirit; unleſs thou incline me to love the good I know, and enable me faithfully to fulfil the doctrine I believe. *Speak therefore, Lord*, I ſay again; to thee thy ſervant liſtens gladly, for *thou haſt the words of eternal life*, John iv. Speak powerfully to my ſoul, and carry the ſaving truths home to my conſcience and affections; that thy words may bring comfort and peace, reformation and holineſs to thy attentive ſervant, and to thy ſelf immortal honour and praiſe.

CHAP. III.

Of the general diſregard to God's word, and the obedience due to it.

CHRIST.

SINCE then, my ſon, thou ſo paſſionately deſireſt to hear my voice, incline now thine ears to my words. Words, which well deſerve, and will abundantly reward thy moſt diligent attention; for they are ſweet and attractive, far above all the engaging arts of human eloquence; uſeful and inſtructive, beyond the moſt laboured ſyſtems of philoſophy. The wiſdom of this world could not invent, or order, nor can it comprehend them. The myſterious truths they declare are too ſtrong for human ſenſe to comprehend; nor canſt thou enter into their ſecrets, till guided by that light from whence they flow. My precepts are pure and ſpiritual, ſuch as a carnal and impure heart can find no reliſh in. My every word is of weight; and ſpoken, not to entertain the curious, and pleaſe ſenſual ears, but to ſubdue the heart, and command a ſtrict obedience. Hear therefore, but hear as becomes thee, with reſpectful ſilence, and entire ſubmiſſion; with profound and awful humility; with an earneſt deſire to be taught; and ſincere and vigorous reſolutions of doing afterwards as thou art taught.

Diſciple.] I own the tranſcendant favour, and heartily acknowledge, with thy holy prophet, that *bleſſed is the man whom thou chaſteneſt, O Lord, and teacheſt him in thy law; that thou mayeſt give him ſtrength in time of adverſity, leſt he fall away with the ungodly.*

Chriſt.] That prophet ſpoke what I inſpired, and ſo did all thoſe holy men of old; for they were all of my ſending. Nor is my care at all abated now, tho' the effects of it may be leſs viſible. For I, who taught them then, continue teaching ſtill; propoſing univerſal ſalvation, tho' the terms thereof are not univerſally regarded. For there are many deaf to all my charms; and therefore deaf, becauſe they ſtop their ears; *hate my inſtructions, and will none of my reproofs.* They liſten to the world much rather than to God, and are more diſpoſed to obey their own corrupt and ſenſual appetites, than his pure and heavenly will. The world invites them with ſhort and tranſitory, trifling and empty joys, and they greedily engage in its ſervice; I covenant for eternal and excellent rewards; and the inſenſible wretches will not conſider, or think them worth their acceptance. This folly is univerſal; for who among the ſons of men, expreſſes half that zeal and earneſtneſs, that ſolicitous deſire to pleaſe, and dutiful fear to offend, in his deportment towards me, which he does in matters relating to this world, or in obedience to maſters upon earth? Conſider this, and bluſh for ſhame! for what, but ſhame and confuſion of face, can be the effect of thy reflection upon this unworthy uſage, this moſt abſurd folly?

A ſmall preferment is eſteemed a valuable conſideration for long and painful journeys. Men fly for it eagerly, and haſten all they can to get ground of their competitors; this is every one's care, and it is accounted a reproach to be negligent in ſuch purſuits. But, when advancement to heaven and eternal happineſs is offer'd, they are ſlothful and unactive, and ſcarce a man is to be found, who thinks it worth while to mend his pace, or ſets one ſtep forward to meet, or to ſecure to himſelf ſo glorious an advantage. A little ſordid gain engages moſt mens induſtry; a trifling ſum embroils them in tedious expenſive ſuits, and irreconcilable hatreds; and promiſes of things ſcarce worth their having, they are content to drudge for; to loſe the eaſe of their days, and the ſleep of their nights, and think their toil and care well paid, if they can compaſs them at laſt: But a ſubſtantial and unchangeable good, a recompence greater than they knew how to value juſtly, immortal glory, and the honours of the ſaints, are ſunk ſo low in wretched mens eſteem, that the leaſt pains and hardſhip are thought too much to acquire them.

And art thou not aſhamed, lazy, inſenſible, murmuring wretch! that the children of this world ſhould purſue death and ruin, with a more vigorous induſtry and zeal, than thou canſt find in thy heart to beſtow upon immortal life and happineſs? Shall toys and vanities win more upon their affections, than ſolid and true good can upon thine? Nay, even thoſe vanities, whoſe very enjoyments are empty, do often mock their hopes, and are never enjoyed at all; their friends promiſe and deceive; they labour, but cannot attain: but my promiſes are without repentance; none taxeth me with breach of faith, or can complain, that his dependance upon my word hath at any time diſappointed him. For I require only love and perſeverance; and, if theſe are not wanting, I anſwer to the full, nay, I far exceed, my ſervants largeſt wiſhes and longing expectations. Yet falſe and fickle men can eaſily revolt, and the God, who cannot lye, calls and promiſes in vain! I am the ſure rewarder of all that diligently ſeek me; and if ſuch meet with ſufferings and ſharp temptations, theſe are not marks of my diſpleaſure, but wiſely order'd, and kindly intended, to prove the ſincerity of my ſervants zeal, and to illuſtrate their virtues.

Write then my words in thy heart; engrave them in deep and laſting characters; ponder them diligently, for thou ſhalt find them a ſeaſonable relief and neceſſary ſupport in the day of tryal and adverſity. What reading only hath not taught thee, affliction will interpret and make plain. For I do not always viſit my choſen alike. Sometimes the comforts of my grace are proper; at others, the withdrawing thoſe comforts, and bringing their patience and conſtancy to the touch-ſtone, by outward calamities, and inward anguiſh of ſpirit. Thus I daily train them up in goodneſs, by chaſtiſing and making them hate their ſins, and cultivating and encouraging their advancement in virtue. The one diſpenſation engages their love of me, the other ſpeedily abates their fondneſs for the world. But loſt and wretched is that ſtupid creature, upon whom theſe methods make no juſt impreſſion; for *he that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him in the laſt day.*

CHAP. IV.

A prayer for heavenly inſtruction and devotion.

DISCIPLE.

O LORD, my God, thou art my all, my only good; but who, alas! am I, that I ſhould take upon me to ſpeak to ſo great, ſo glorious a majeſty? Poor ſinful duſt and aſhes; a wretched worm; leſs than the leaſt of all thy ſervants; much leſs, much viler, and more deſpicable, than I dare to think, or am able to expreſs or conceive. And this very vileneſs, Lord, I beg thou wouldſt in mercy remember, that ſo my helpleſs deſolate condition may move thy tender pity, to a miſerable creature, who neither is, nor hath, nor can do any thing, without thee. For thou only art good, and holy, and powerful; and that of power ſo immenſe, of mercy ſo diffuſive, that thou filleſt all things with thy goodneſs; and none but thoſe guilty ſouls, who refuſe to partake of thy grace, are ſhut out from its kind influences. Behold me then hungring and thirſting after thy righteouſneſs, and let not me be ſent empty away. Call up thy bowels, and remember thy compaſſions and old loving-kindneſſes; and fill my ſoul with thy grace and heavenly diſpoſitions, that it may be a dwelling fit to entertain that bleſſed inhabitant, who will not take up his abode in defiled and unſanctified places.

But how can I furniſh a houſe for my Lord, except he will vouchſafe to aſſiſt and ſupply my wants? How can I ſuſtain the miſeries and temptations of a troubleſome dangerous world, except thou graciouſly interpoſe and ſupport my weakneſs? Turn not then thy face away from me; neither delay thy fatherly care; for if thou grant not refreſhing dews, and water not my heart with thy grace, it will remain a dry and barren ground. Teach me, dear God, to know and do thy will; and with ſincere humility, and unwearied zeal, enable me to perſevere in my obedience. For thou art my wiſdom, and my righteouſneſs; my infirmities are not hid from thee; thou knoweſt me perfectly, and underſtoodeſt all my defects, not only before I was born, but even long before this world it ſelf was made.

CHAP. V.

Walk humbly with thy God, and worſhip him in truth.

CHRIST.

I DO, indeed, my ſon, know thy frailties, and thy dangers, but let not theſe diſcourage thy endeavours. Seek and love the truth, and let thy heart be right with me, and all ſhall center in thy everlaſting happineſs. For truth and ſincerity will be thy protection, and defend thee from the aſſaults of the fleſh and the devil, and the attempts of wicked and deceitful men. Thoſe who are *thus ſet free, ſhall be free indeed*, John viii. nor ſhall the allurements, or the diſcouragements of enemies to the truth, be able to enſnare or divert thee from thy duty.

Diſciple.] True, Lord. And this perſuaſion makes me more earneſtly to implore thy aſſiſtance. That thou, who art truth itſelf, wouldſt thro' thy infinite mercy condeſcend to inſtruct, and direct me; to preſerve and protect me; to break the ſnares of the ungodly to pieces; to deliver my ſoul, and eſtabliſh me unto the end; to purify me from all corrupt and inordinate affections, that my own happy experience may convince me of what I already believe, and render thy ſervice perfect freedom.

Chriſt.] My children cannot be more zealouſly diſpoſed to aſk theſe bleſſings, than I am readily diſpoſed and pleaſed to grant them. Here therefore the truth, and how thou mayeſt recommend thy ſelf to my everlaſting favour and acceptance. Reflect with ſad remorſe upon thy paſt offences; let the remembrance of theſe render thee vile in thy own eyes; and take heed, that no confidence in thy beſt actions ſwell thee with dangerous conceits of thy own deſerts. For ſure it is, thou art a ſinner, laden with guilt and many grievous infirmities; prone in thy own nature to vanity, eaſily ſeduced, quickly diverted from good reſolutions, and ſoon overcome by very ſlight temptations. In ſhort, no excellence belongs to thee, which can in any degree juſtify thy pride or oſtentation; but infinite occaſions there are to exerciſe thy humility and lamentation, infinitely more in truth, than thou canſt be duly ſenſible of.

Let not then the miſtaken value of any thing thou art, or doeſt, delude thee with falſe appearances of ſelf worth and perfection; let not thy affections be ſeduced to follow vain and wretched objects, or think any advantage can deſerve thy praiſe or admiration, thy love and pains; except ſuch only as are certain and eternal. Let truth be thy chief delight, for this is unchangeable; let thy own unworthineſs be the chief object of thy hatred and contempt, for this is the vileſt, the juſteſt thing, upon which thou can'ſt vent diſpleaſure. Fear and decline no calamity, comparably to ſin. For no loſs, no worldly diſappointments or diſaſters can have ſo diſmal conſequences, as the loſs of a good conſcience and God's favour, by tranſgreſſing his righteous commandments.

Some men are more concerned for ſubtilty of knowledge in religion, than for an humble and ſincere obedience. They are acted by a ſpirit of pride and curioſity, and affect to penetrate the myſteries of faith; and value themſelves much more for being able learnedly to diſpute for truth, than for adorning it by their lives, and rendring that knowledge effectual to ſalvation. Theſe men generally fall into dangerous ſnares. I ſet my face againſt their arrogance, and ſuffer them to periſh thro' the vanity of their own imaginations.

But do thou employ thy mind upon other kind of enquiries, and account it greater wiſdom to get a perfect knowledge of thy own works, than thoſe of almighty God. *His ways are unſearchable, and paſt finding out*, Rom. xi. but thy own are neceſſary to be ſcrutinouſly examined. And the conſideration of the evil thou haſt done, and the good thou haſt left undone, will turn to better account, than thy elaborate ſpeculations, concerning the divine nature and counſels. Some place their religion in images, ſome in good books, ſome in an outward ſhew and pomp of devotion, meaſuring their piety by the number of the prayers they repeat, the ſermons they hear, the meals they abſtain from: others honour me with their lips, and talk familiarly of me, whoſe hearts I am as utter a ſtranger to, as their allowing me no place in their thoughts and affections can make me. But ſome again, without ſuch formal pretences, are men of true ſpiritual wiſdom, and inward purity; their deſires and converſation are in heaven, and earthly entertainments are no longer welcome to them; they even grudge thoſe hours, which the neceſſary cares for ſupporting theſe bodies cut off from the greater concerns of their ſouls. And theſe are the men, that lend a willing ear, and bring a temper truly tractable to the inſtructions of my ſpirit: in them he reigns and triumphs. For, having overcome the corrupt inclinations of fleſh, and inſpired them with a true chriſtian bravery of ſoul, they contemn the treacherous vanities of this world, and lay out all their love and labour upon the joys of that better world, which, till God thinks fit to admit them into it, they endeavour to anticipate, by keeping their minds night and day intent upon it.

CHAP. VI.

The power of the love of God.

DISCIPLE.

I LAUD and magnify thy glorious name, O father of heaven, father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, for all the goodneſs and tender compaſſions, with which thou haſt been pleaſed to remember and relieve my miſery. For unto thy loving kindneſs alone, O father of mercies, and God of all conſolation, are owing all the ſupports, with which the ſoul of thy unworthy ſervant hath been at any time refreſhed in the midſt of my troubles. And therefore to thee alone be the praiſe. To thee, O father, with thy only begotten ſon, and the bleſſed ſpirit the comforter, will I render praiſe, honour, and thankſgiving for evermore. Deſcend then, bleſſed God, into that ſoul, for which thou haſt expreſſed ſo great a tenderneſs, and let thy preſence fill me with gladneſs: for thou art my health, my joy and my glory, my hope and my refuge in the day of diſtreſs.

I muſt confeſs with ſorrow that my love is weak, and my virtue imperfect; nor can the one be ſupported without thy grace, or the other be cheriſhed, unleſs thou illuminate my ſoul, and revive me with thy heavenly comforts. O viſit me then with thy ſalvation, and make me to improve under thy holy diſcipline. Deliver and purify my heart from all corrupt affections, and irregular paſſions; heal my ſpiritual diſeaſes, and take away that droſs and filth, which obſtruct my purer delights of divine love, diſcompoſe my patience, and ſhake my reſolutions of perſeverance.

For love is great and powerful, an excellent virtue, and a laudable exciter to good actions. It lightens the heavieſt burthens, makes difficulties eaſy, and ſmooths the rugged ways of duty; takes out the bitterneſs of ſufferings, and gives them a delightful reliſh. This is the principle, which fires us with a vigorous and active zeal, inſpires brave and noble attempts, and ſpurs us on with an impatient deſire of attaining higher degrees of perfection. For love ever labours to be uppermoſt, and diſdains to take up with low and vulgar atchievements. It hates confinement, and would fain get looſe from all worldly affections; that ſo its inward and ſpiritual proſpects may not be intercepted, by any temporal good or evil, which darken and block it up. In love is the perfection of pleaſure and ſtrength; it is higher than heaven; broader than the ſea; it fills the ſpacious univerſe, for it is born of God; the firſt and beſt of all his creatures; and as it came from him, ſo it never reſts till it have got above all finite beings, and center again in that only, that infinite Good, from whence it originally ſprung.

The perſon excited by it flies with eager haſte, does every thing with chearfulneſs and pleaſure, and ſuffers no impediments to ſtop him in his courſe: he gives all things liberally, and yet poſſeſſes all, becauſe his ſoul is united to that ſupreme good, in and from whom is derived all perfections. He looks not ſo much at the gift as the giver; and be the quality of that what it will, it only ſerves to render him more thankful to its author. Love knows no bounds, no meaſure; but thinks it can never do enough; and attempts things even above its ſtrength, not conſidering ſo much what it is able, as what it is deſirous and diſpoſed to effect; the vehemence of deſire takes off all ſenſe of difficulty, and thinks nothing ſo great, but that it may and ought to aim at it. And hence proceed thoſe great and aſtoniſhing attainments, which love daily brings to paſs, where the fire continues ſtrong, and is not damped by ſloth and faint-heartedneſs.

Love is eternally awake, never tired with labour, nor oppreſſed with affliction, nor diſcouraged by fear; but, like a clear and ſtrong flame, is conſtantly mounting upwards, and makes its way thro' all oppoſition. It cries continually in the ears (for fervent love is that cry which pierces the ears) of the moſt high; and all the language of devout ſouls inflamed with it, is to this effect: *my* God, *my* love, *thou art my all; and I am entirely thine.* Enlarge my heart, and make me capable of yet more love; that I may feel and feaſt upon the ſweetneſs of heavenly affections, and even diſſolve and loſe my ſelf in the beatifick extaſies of this delectable diſpoſition. Increaſe and inſpire this divine flame, that, not content to excel others, I may daily excel my ſelf. Teach me the ſong of love, and receive me on high, to him in whom my ſoul delighteth; and fill me with ſuch raptures of joy and praiſe, that even ſenſe and life may be ſwallowed up in bliſs. Let me love thee much more than my ſelf; nay, love my ſelf and all good men, to whom thou art dear, only in and for thee; for ſo haſt thou commanded in that law of love, which is but as it were a beam and radiency of thy own glorious and divine excellence.

The love of God is quick in its motions, ſincere in its intentions, ardent and zealous in devotion; ſweet to the ſoul, brave in attempting, patient in enduring, faithful in executing, prudent in action, ſlow in reſentment, generous and manly, and ſeeks not to pleaſe the perſon's ſelf, but the perſon beloved. For, where a man ſeeks only his own advantage, there intereſt, not love, is the principle upon which he moves. Love is cautious and circumſpect, ſincere and humble; not ſoft and effeminate, not fickle and fantaſtical; not fond of vanities; but ſober and grave, chaſte and refined, conſtant and ſedate, ſevere and reſerved. This diſpoſes us to ſubmiſſion and reſpect towards our ſuperiors; to a mean and modeſt opinion of our ſelves; to gratitude and devotion towards God; it inſpires hope and godly truſt, even in times of calamity and diſcomfort. And neceſſary it is that it ſhould do ſo, ſince no man is ſo happy as to love without pain, or always to live under the light of God's countenance, ſo as that no clouds ſhould ever intercept the cheering warmth of his favour, and create ſome dejected intervals.

That man therefore deſerves not the character of one that loves God, who is not ſincerely diſpoſed and heartily content to ſuffer any afflictions, which the divine providence judges fit to inflict; or thinks much to do whatever his will declares proper to be performed. In a word, the ſharpeſt and moſt unpalatable proofs of our virtue, declare beſt the fervency and ſincerity of it; and if diſaſters or grievous accidents cool or draw off our affections, this is an argument, that a man is not yet what the *apoſtle* requires we ſhould all be, *rooted and grounded in love*, Epheſ. iii. 17.

CHAP. VII.

The tryal of true love.

CHRIST.

I HAVE obſerved, my ſon, thy notions of divine love; but thou, alas! art not yet arrived to that reſolute bravery and prudence there deſcribed.

Diſciple.] Lord, make me ſenſible wherein I fail, and teach me how to amend it.

Chriſt.] A ſmall temptation ſhocks thy obedience. Thou ſtarteſt at difficulties, and falleſt from thy own ſtedfaſtneſs, if I ſeem to withdraw my favour. The comforts and aſſiſtance of graces are to be zealouſly prayed for, but not with impatience: nor mayeſt thou ſo ſet thy heart upon them, as preſently to recoil, if ſuch ſupplies do not at all times anſwer thy expectation. I hide my face to try thy courage: for true chriſtian magnanimity is moſt eminently ſeen in troubles and diſtreſſes; in turning the deaf ear to all thoſe crafty inſinuations of the enemy, which take the advantage of deep and melancholy perplexity of heart, to ruin and ſeduce unſtable ſouls, by ſeducing them to deſpair. This virtue rejoices in proſperity, but does it with ſuch temper, as not to be offended, and backſlide by reaſon of adverſity.

He that loves prudently, keeps his eyes upon the giver, conſiders the kindneſs and diſpoſition of his friend, and values the gift by that; not by its own quality and intrinſick worth. He finds more real ſatisfaction in my affection, than in the moſt profuſe and deſirable benefits which flow from it. Not that I would condemn all doubts and ſad miſgivings, for thoſe are incident to the beſt men; and the infirmities of nature admit not ſuch perfect evenneſs of mind, as is always alike affected with the love and delights of holineſs. Thoſe ſenſible pleaſures that good men ſometimes feel themſelves tranſported with, are the effect of bounty and favour, and great indulgence; not neceſſary and inſeparable conſequences of virtue. The ſweet foretaſtes of heavenly joys are ſuch as you cannot depend upon, till brought to the fruition of that land of promiſe. And therefore no juſt concluſions can be drawn from thence, to the prejudice of thoſe who want them; becauſe in this life they are given at diſcretion, and frequently make way for a ſeverer and more ſeaſonable diſcipline. And when that diſcipline takes place, then to perſiſt in well doing, to ſtrive manfully againſt all the reluctancies of fleſh and blood, and hold out in deſpite of all the importunities and diſcouraging ſuggeſtions of the tempter; this is a proof of true ſpiritual bravery, and entitles ſuch valiant combatants to a noble reward, and exceeding bright crown.

Let reaſon therefore, and a well-grounded faith, not fancy and imagination, govern thy behaviour; and, after what manner ſoever thy ſoul is affected, let thy intentions of obedience be ſtill the ſame, and thy perſeverance unbroken. Sometimes perhaps thou art all rapture and joy, and theſe extaſies are not what the prophane world ſuppoſe, mere dreams and deluſions: ſometimes again thou wilt relapſe into weakneſs and wandrings; theſe are not thy choice, but thy misfortune; nor doſt thou create them to thy ſelf, but ſuffer them with much regret. Now what is not the man's own act, ſhall never be imputed to him as a fault; and what is thus by God's permiſſion, or the frailty of nature, if rightly managed, will tend to thy advantage, and rather improve than endanger thy piety.

This indeed you muſt know, and conſtantly remember; that the inveterate enemy of ſouls is ever labouring by all means to cool your zeal. He watches and greedily takes hold of all occaſions to ſlacken your devotion, to prevail with you to neglect, or abate of, your prayers and other holy exerciſes; to divert your thoughts of Chriſt and his ſufferings, and fix them upon objects of a different kind; to beat you off from that ſtrict guard, which ought always to be kept upon your ſoul; and to undermine your good intentions, and repeated reſolutions. He conveys many looſe and wicked thoughts into your heart, uſes a thouſand ſleights and artifices, to repreſent religion a tireſome, tedious and unneceſſary thing, and to draw off your attendance upon God in prayers, in hearing his word, and in reading the holy ſcriptures. And happy he thinks himſelf, if by degrees he can draw you to a neglect of theſe things: for nothing more provokes his malice, and croſſes his deſigns, than to ſee men frequently upon their knees, zealous in diſcovering and confeſſing their ſins; devout and attentive comers to church; and conſtant receivers of the Lord's Supper. When therefore he would perſuade you to be cold and remiſs in any matter of this nature, be ſure to give no credit to his falſe and wheedling inſinuations, for they are ſo many ſnares laid to captivate and to deſtroy you. Turn ſmartly back upon him, with a *get thee behind me, Satan*; "Bluſh, if thou canſt, " unclean ſpirit, at thy own treacherous villany; I " am well aware of thy deadly baits; and ſenſible " that hell and death are upon the hook; thy ſly " deceits are loſt upon me, for I am reſolved al" ready, and my Jeſus, who vanquiſhed thee upon " the croſs, will aſſiſt my weakneſs, and enable me " to overcome thy temptations. Think not to ter" rify me with difficulties; for death and ſufferings " are light calamities, in compariſon of guilt and " ſin; and theſe I infinitely rather chuſe than once " to comply with thy wicked motions. Be gone " then, and for ever hold thy peace; for I will ſtop " my ears, and am from this minute inflexibly deaf " to thy moſt troubleſome ſolicitations. Thou " thinkeſt to run down a poor weak mortal, but " even that mortal is a match *for thee through Chriſt* " *that ſtrengthens him*. And ſtrengthen me he will; " for *the Lord is my light and ſalvation, whom then* " *ſhall I fear? The Lord is the ſtrength of my life,* " *of whom then ſhall I be afraid?* Pſal. xxvii. *Tho'* " *an hoſt were banded together againſt me, yet will I* " *not be diſmay'd; for the Lord is my helper, and* " *my God is the rock of my confidence.*"

Fight therefore the good fight, and follow the captain of thy ſalvation, like a ſtout ſoldier; and, if at any time thou loſe ground through human infirmities, rally thy forces again quickly, and enter upon a ſecond engagement with redoubled vigor; not doubting ſeaſonable aſſiſtance from me. But if at any time thou prove victorious, let not this ſucceſs exalt thee beyond meaſure. For pride and arrogance are of fatal conſequence, they often end in dangerous errors, and are juſtly puniſh'd with almoſt incurable blindneſs. Let the frequent examples of vain men, undone by their own folly and my juſt indignation, be ſet before thy eyes, as ſo many ſea-marks, to warn thee from ſteering the ſame dangerous courſe: and the greater conqueſts thou obtaineſt over the devil and thy own frailties, the more humble and cautious let theſe advantages make thee in thy conduct; and the more juſt to God, in aſcribing the whole ſucceſs and glory to the powerful aſſiſtance of his ſpirit.

CHAP. VIII.

Grace muſt be received without oſtentation.

CHRIST.

MY ſon, when thou feeleſt thy ſoul warmed with devotion and holy zeal for my ſervice, it will be adviſeable to decline all thoſe methods of publiſhing it to the world, which vain men are ſo induſtrious to take, and content thy ſelf with its being known to God and thy own conſcience. Rather endeavour to moderate and ſuppreſs thoſe pompous expreſſions of it, in which ſome place the very perfection of zeal. Think meanly of thy own virtues. Boaſt not of that grace, whereby thou art capable of differing from another. But let the remembrance of thy own unworthineſs make thee fear the loſs of gifts, which thou didſt not deſerve ever to have. This is not only an undeſerved, it is alſo a tranſient and uncertain privilege; for the brighteſt and warmeſt zeal is apt to languiſh and wax cold; and unleſs men could aſſure themſelves of ſuch a degree of grace, as would alter and fix theſe variable natures of theirs, the fervours of religious and holy deſires can never be conſtant and equal.

While therefore thou enjoyeſt theſe pleaſing pious comforts, humble thy ſoul with reflections upon thy impotence and miſery, thy coldneſs and deadneſs, when thou haſt them not. And conſider withal, that the improvement and commendation of a chriſtian's virtue conſiſts, not only in the thankful uſe of grace, but in a modeſt, humble and reſigned temper, which can bear its being taken away without murmuring or deſpondency; ſtill exciting and encouraging it ſelf, ſtill continuing the ſame diligence in holy duties, and never ſuffering ſloth, or deſpair, or diſcontent, to abate one tittle of a man's beſt endeavours, to do the utmoſt his condition is capable of.

This is an excellence which very few come up to; idleneſs and impatience are the uſual effects of ſpiritual diſappointments. Which yet is moſt unreaſonable, if we think at all, in whoſe diſpoſal theſe, as well as all other ſucceſſes are. For man cannot command events; God is ſole maſter of his own favours. He gives to whom he pleaſes; nor will he be limited, otherwiſe than by his own wiſdom, what or how much, or in what time and manner he ſhall give. And even, when he is moſt liberal, men may convert his beſt gifts into occaſions of their own deſtruction. Thus ſome men of bold ungovern'd zeal aſpire at things beyond their ſtrength, and expreſs more vehemence than conduct in their actions. They are perfectly carried out of themſelves with eagerneſs; forget they are ſtill poor inſects upon earth, and think of nothing leſs than building their neſt in heaven. Now theſe are often left to themſelves, and taught by ſad experience, that the faint flutterings of man are weak and ineffectual, and that none ſoars to heaven, except I aſſiſt his flight, and mount him upon my own wings.

It is therefore highly expedient, that perſons of more zeal than experience, ſhould not proceed upon their own falſe meaſure of themſelves, but refer their proceedings to the guidance, and better judgment of ſome perſons, whom long time, and much obſervation hath taught to temper thoſe vain conceits they are apt to entertain of their own ſtrength, and to proportion their undertakings to their circumſtances. But this is a ſubmiſſion which humility muſt qualify them for. For he who is wiſe in his own eyes, ſeldom conſents to be directed by another. And this conſideration makes a very moderate degree of knowledge, attended with a modeſt and governable mind, much more ſafe and eligible, than the higheſt attainments with pride and ſelf-conceit. The mighty tranſports and great ſatisfaction men frequently feel from their own improvement in goodneſs, are of dangerous conſequence, if they be ſuffered to deſtroy the remembrance of a man's former weakneſs, and his fears of relapſing into ſin again. And on the other hand, theſe fears may run into exceſs, if difficulties tempt men to deſpair, and beget

get melancholy diſtruſts of God's ability and readineſs to relieve and reſcue them by the ſuccours of that grace, which knows how to expel and defeat the ſtrongeſt temptations.

The ſame diſpoſition of ſoul, which leads to ſecurity in times of proſperity and peace, inclines to fearfulneſs and dejection of mind in the day of adverſity and conflict. For would a man but guard himſelf againſt vain confidences, and proceed always with caution and prudence, when his graces and his hopes are at the higheſt; this would preſerve him from thoſe dangers, which unwary heat and too ſanguine hopes are apt to involve him in. And therefore, when you form to your ſelf the faireſt and moſt promiſing expectations, it will be ſeaſonable to conſider, what may become of you, if God ſhould hide his face, and abate or wholly withdraw thoſe enlivening comforts, which now ſo much exalt you. And ſo again, when theſe are interrupted, ſupport your ſpirits in thoſe dark intervals, with the hope, that day may break upon you again, and that this night of affliction is prolonged, to make you more adviſed, and get the greater honour.

For ſuch tryals as theſe are more for the advantage of my faithful ſervants, than a conſtant ſucceſſion of proſperity and conſolation could poſſibly be. They muſt needs be ſo, ſince virtue does not conſiſt in abundance of illumination and knowledge, but in lowlineſs of mind, in meekneſs and charity, in a mind entirely reſigned to God, and ſincerely diſpoſed to ſerve and pleaſe him; in a juſt ſenſe of a man's own vileneſs, and not only thinking very meanly of one's ſelf, but being well content to be ſo thought of by others.

CHAP. IX.

Of acknowledging our unworthineſs before God.

DISCIPLE.

BEHOLD, now I take upon me to ſpeak unto my Lord, who am but duſt and aſhes, Gen. xviii. vile and ſinful duſt and aſhes! For, ſhould I entertain any better opinion of my ſelf, I make my God my enemy, and ſtand convicted by the undeniable teſtimony, and juſt reproaches of my own guilty conſcience. But if I humble my ſoul, caſt off all vain imaginations of merit, and think my ſelf that wretched thing I really am, thy grace exalts me; thy light cheers and ſupports me, and all that groundleſs pride, to which my corrupt heart is naturally diſpoſed, vaniſhes into nothing. O! give me then a right underſtanding of my ſelf; help me truly to diſcover what I am now, what I was originally, and whence I came. That I am nothing, and proceeded out of nothing, and, if deſtitute of thy grace, have nothing left, but what I had much better be without, namely, ſin and infirmity. And yet as vile, as ſinful, as dejected, as I am of my ſelf, as ſoon as thy bright beams of favour are caſt upon me, my weakneſs is made ſtrong, and my heavineſs turn'd into joy. I cannot obſerve the ſudden wondrous change without aſtoniſhment, and am not able to account for the happy exaltation of my nature; which, tho' by its own weight inclined to ſink perpetually, and, by a fatal tendency to ſin and hell, preſs'd down with a load of fleſh and frailty, is yet, by the mighty operations of grace, enabled to aſpire to ſpiritual and refined objects, and take ardent flights to thee and heaven.

This, I am duly ſenſible, is the ſtrange effect of thy free grace alone, preventing my deſires, inſpiring religious thoughts, aſſiſting my weakneſſes, ſupplying my wants, reſcuing me from dangers innumerable; which, without theſe powerful ſuccours, muſt unavoidably deſtroy and ſwallow me up. For an inordinate love of my ſelf was formerly my ruin, but a ſincere love of thee, and an entire dependance upon thy goodneſs, recovers and reſtores me; and the more I love and truſt in thee, the leſs reaſon I find to value and have any confidence in any thing of my own. For thou, O deareſt redeemer, art bountiful and kind, far beyond my deſerts: my deſerts! alas, they are none at all, or worſe than none! But thou exceedeſt even my largeſt deſires, and giveſt more, infinitely more, than I either dare preſume to aſk, or am able to expreſs.

Eternal thanks and praiſe be therefore rendred to my God, for that unſpeakable goodneſs, which diſdains not to beſtow the precious gifts of his grace and ſpirit, upon a wretch unworthy the leaſt of all his mercies. Yea, bleſſed and adored be his liberality and long-ſuffering, which, in deſpight of all our provocations, continues to engage thoſe by kindneſs, who, by their former ingratitude and abuſe of it, had juſtly forfeited all future favours; and, by many excellent endearments, and holy importunities, invites and draws men to himſelf and their own happineſs, who have an averſion to both. Even ſo, ſweet Jeſus, extend thy compaſſion, and continue thy care of us; who are too prone to neglect thee, and ruin ourſelves. Oh! bring us to thy ſelf, by thankful, humble, pious diſpoſitions; for we ourſelves are nothing, and thou art holineſs and health, our only ſtrength and deliverer.

CHAP. X.

Of doing all to the glory of God.

CHRIST.

THE ſure and only way to happineſs, is, to make me, my ſon, the chief and ultimate end of all thy actions and deſires. By this thy ſincerity will beſt be proved; by this thy mind will be refined and purified from all thoſe ſordid intereſts and partial reſpects, which are apt to debauch human nature, too much of it ſelf addicted to private gain and ſelfiſhneſs, and thoſe falſe proſpects of happineſs which the love of this world vainly propoſes. For, as ſoon as any man deſcends to theſe, and ſeeks *himſelf* in all he does, he finds his own inability to compaſs his intentions, and grows barren and unprofitable. Keep me then conſtantly in view, and aim at nothing but the advancement of my honour: which is indeed but reaſonable and juſt, ſince I am the firſt and perfect good; the ſource from whence all things flow, and therefore all of right return to, and ſhould center at laſt in me again. I aſk but of my own, the tribute and acknowledgment of the ſucceſſes given by my providence, of the actions performed by virtue of my concurrence, of the very faculties and powers originally inſpired by my creating ſpirit.

The high and honourable, as well as mean and low, the rich and poor, all drink of this common fountain, and the moſt powerful of the ſons of men can do nothing, till furniſhed with ability from hence, This ſpring is inexhauſtible, and they who receive moſt, and are grateful in their returns, I water with more liberal meaſures of grace. Them that honour me, I never fail to honour and bleſs in a viſible and eminent manner; but, if men glory in any thing but the Lord, I blaſt their devices, diſappoint their hopes, and make them aſhamed of their vain boaſtings. For ſo have I ordered matters by my providence, that no true laſting ſatisfaction ſhall ever fill that heart which ſets its affections upon private and paltry advantages. Croſſes from without, and perplexities from within, are the certain conſequences of worldly deſires, and ſelfiſh principles.

If therefore thou haſt received or done any good thing, take care of miſplacing the honour and thanks due for it upon thy ſelf, or any other perſon. For this is robbing God of his due, from whom men receive whatever they have, or are, and ſtand in duty and equity bound, to pay him their moſt grateful acknowledgements. Since therefore the whole is my gift, when I demand the whole thanks and praiſe, I demand but the product of my own; and this is what, as I injure no man in requiring, ſo I reſolve never to depart from.

This is the true principle of juſtice; neceſſary to be conſidered, and thoroughly ſubmitted to; becauſe it checks and utterly confounds that other moſt pernicious principle of pride and vain-glory, to which mankind are ſo exceedingly inclined. Nor is it leſs conducive to their happineſs, than to their duty. For, where this generous love and regard of me takes place, it does not only engage my favour, but ſecures the man from envy and diſcontent, partiality and every other paſſion, that uſes to torment little and worldly minded people. For this reſpectful deference and fervent love of God enlarges the ſoul, and fills it with thoughts truly great and noble. And therefore this is a certain mark of true and heavenly wiſdom to make me its only joy, and hope; for, how can he be wiſe, who does not ſee, that God is the perfection and original of all good, and that the neceſſary conſequence of his being ſo, is that he is to be praiſed, honoured, admired, in, and for, and above all: ſince all the good which men pretend to eſteem, is by communication from him; an emanation from his fulneſs, an effect of that ſole, that univerſal cauſe?

CHAP. XI.

God's ſervice is perfect freedom.

DISCIPLE.

I WILL again take the confidence to ſpeak unto the Lord; nor ought I indeed to hold my peace, but addreſs my ſelf to thee, my Lord and God, my heavenly king, that ſitteſt on thy throne far above the ſkies, and thus will I proclaim thy mercies and my own happineſs. How pure, O Lord, how ſweet, how exquiſite are the pleaſures thou reſerveſt for them that fear thee, that delight themſelves in thy love, that are entirely devoted to thy ſervice. No tongue can ſufficiently expreſs the wondrous joys, the tranſports, and raviſhing extaſies, which fill theſe pious ſouls, inflamed with the love, and employed in the contemplation of thee. For this is a ſubject boundleſs as thy goodneſs; that goodneſs, which exerted it ſelf in commanding and forming me out of nothing. And, when that being which thou gaveſt was rendred liable to eternal miſery, a freſh and yet more valuable inſtance of thy mercy, was that of beſtowing upon me a new and better life, when I was worſe than nothing. For thou hadſt compaſſion on my weakneſs and my wandrings. Thou ſoughteſt and with tender care broughteſt back thy loſt ſheep, taughteſt me the right way, helpedſt me to walk in it, and didſt inſtruct and guide me in thy love.

O thou over-flowing ſpring of endleſs love! how ſhall I worthily magnify thee, how can I forget thee; thee, who in my loweſt ebb of miſery, didſt condeſcend ſo graciouſly, ſo effectually, to remember me? Whoſe kindneſs reſcued me from death, and far exceeded all my hopes; reſtored me to that favour, which my ſins had forfeited, and ſhewed it ſelf a friend to that wretch who was become thine, and his own enemy. *What ſhall I render to the Lord for all the benefits he hath done me?* If I reſolve to ſerve thee, yet how poor a tribute is that, to him whom all created nature is engaged to ſerve? This is ſo far from a ſufficient return, that I ought rather to admire thy mercy, and eſteem it an honour to my ſelf when thou vouchſafeſt to accept the ſervice of ſo poor, ſo worthleſs a creature, and doſt not diſdain to reckon me amongſt thoſe, whom thou ſuffereſt to do thee homage.

For even in this I pay thee but thy own, ſince I and all I have are thine. But why do I ſpeak of ſerving thee, when by a moſt aſtoniſhing condeſcenſion, even thou, the mighty God, art pleaſed to ſerve me. For this is the effect of that excellently good providence, which hath contrived and ordered heaven and earth, and all the creatures in ſuch a manner, that they ſhould be uſeful and beneficial to mankind; who hath appointed bleſſed ſpirits above for guards and miniſters to the heirs of ſalvation; and, which is moſt ſurprizing, when thou thy ſelf, for my ſake, hadſt taken upon thee the form of a ſervant, and wert made an afflicted man! When thou didſt give thy life for undone ſinners, and ſtill doſt give thy ſelf in grace, and haſt engaged to give thy ſelf, even the full and eternal fruition of thy glorious Godhead, to every ſincere believer.

O! that it were in my power to make ſuitable returns, for love which paſſes, not my thanks only, but even my knowledge! O! that my ways were made ſo direct, that my whole life might be one continued act of gratitude and obedience! Nay, ſuch is my infirmity, that I muſt be content to wiſh, that any one day of that life might be employed as it ought to be in thy ſervice. I know, O Lord, that thou art worthy to receive all duty, and honour, and praiſe for ever. I am ſenſible that thou art my rightful lord, and I thy poor unprofitable ſervant; that the utmoſt I can do is thy juſt due, and that I ought to take unſpeakable delight in thanking, praiſing and obeying thee; that nothing elſe but this ſhould give me any ſatisfaction, and that, when I have laid my ſelf out entirely upon it, I ſtill have done too little. This is the real perſuaſion, this is the earneſt deſire of my ſoul; and where my power falls ſhort of my inclination, there do thou, I beſeech thee, ſtrengthen and ſupply what is wanting, by thy grace, that my deeds and deportment may bear teſtimony and an edequate proportion to my pious diſpoſition.

To be the meaneſt of thy ſervants is the higheſt advancement; to deſpiſe and forſake all for thee, is true riches and honour. They who thus enter themſelves into thy family, and chearfully undertake this taſk, ſhall have a glorious reward; they will feel the pleaſures of this world, infinitely paid, infinitely outdone, by the better and larger amendments of grace and divine comforts in exchange. They who thus bind themſelves to thee, that abandon worldly cares, and attend to the one thing neceſſary, attain to a true and generous freedom of ſoul. For the ſtrait way of thy commandments is the only compleat law of liberty; thy ſervice is perfect freedom. O happy confinement! which ſets men at large from the ſlavery of ſin, from worldly cares and incumbrances, from the inſupportable tyranny of unruly appetites and domineering paſſions! O bleſſed dependance! which makes us of the moſt high God's retinue, raiſes us up to a level with the angels, renders us dear to the Almighty, a terror to evil ſpirits, conquerors over our greateſt and fierceſt enemy, and recommends us to the love, the praiſe, the imitation, of all good men. Who would not eagerly embrace ſuch a ſervice, where the very work is pleaſant, the encouragements paid down in hand noble, great, and ſatisfactory, and the wages promiſed in recompence for our labours, happineſs exquiſite, unſpeakable, and everlaſting?

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Of regulating our deſires.

CHRIST.

YET ſtill, my ſon, there are many things, in which thou art not ſufficiently inſtructed.

Diſciple.] Lord, be thou pleaſed to let me know, and enable me to underſtand, and do them.

Chriſt.] Thy deſires muſt be reduced into ſubjection, and my will take place in every thing; nor muſt thy own private intereſt, but the zeal and regard for my honour, and the obedience due to my commands, be the governing principle of all thy actions. You feel deſires, like inward ſprings, put you into motion; and very earneſt ſometimes you are of doing what you are thoroughly perſuaded is good. But, even when the thing it ſelf is commendable, the intention and motive men go upon, ought to be ſeriouſly conſidered. For it makes a mighty difference, whether I or themſelves, be principally in their thoughts. Now this diſcovery is not hard to make. For, if my honour be their great concern, howſoever my providence diſpoſes their affairs, they will conclude what I do beſt, and will be contented with it. But if under this diſguiſe of holineſs, there be a lurking corruption of private and by-reſpects, if the love of gain makes men frugal, or ambition virtuous, or the praiſe of the world charitable, or the conſideration of their own health temperate, theſe are principles upon which no dependance can ſafely be had. Their conduct will be unequal, and vary as events do; and every diſappointment of their expectations will produce trouble and impatience.

Don't therefore be too confident of every ſort of inclination to do well; but firſt adviſe with me, and take care to build upon a good foundation. For men who act upon indirect ends, very often repent when it is too late; and that which at firſt they propoſed great ſatisfaction and advantage from, proves at laſt their torment and loſs. Nay, I muſt give you this farther caution yet, that even good inclinations are not to be executed at firſt ſight, nor raſhly purſued without a diligent and prudent obſervation. For it may be your duty ſometimes, to put ſome reſtraints upon the very beſt intentions. They who neglect this, and give free ſcope to their zeal by too great eagerneſs, often exceed the bounds of moderation and decency; ſometimes give offence to their brethren by their extravagant heats, and impetuous ſallies; and ſometimes, upon any reſiſtance or difficulty, which obſtructs thoſe precipitate fervours, loſe all their inward peace, deſiſt from their good deſigns, and fall from the heighth of rapture, to the extremities of melancholy and deſpair. So that, to render thy zeal in well-doing in all points what it ought to be, it is by no means ſufficient, that it be honeſt and well-diſpoſed, unleſs it be alſo ſober, and regular, and diſcreet.

Again, there are ſome occaſions and circumſtances, which render a ſort of holy violence neceſſary, and oblige men to act quite contrary to their inclination; to bear no manner of regard to fleſh and ſenſe, or what will be moſt agreeable any farther than may ſerve to ſet the mind in array againſt them, and reſolutely engage in a formal war, for the reducing, or keeping them in obedience to the ſuperior faculties of the ſoul. For, by thus frequently controlling, and counter-working all that human nature hath a tendency to, the outward man is by degrees qualified for duty, and acquires a peculiar readineſs of doing, or ſuffering, whatever ſhall be impoſed upon it. And in theſe exerciſes the firſt foundations are laid, of contentedneſs with a little, of ſatisfaction in a private and neglected ſtate, a mean and narrow fortune; and of patience under any croſſes or calamities, without thoſe murmuring thoughts, which are apt to beget hard and irreverent reflections, and too often break out in wicked complaints, and ſaucy expoſtulations, againſt the juſtice, and wiſdom, and goodneſs of God and his providence.

CHAP. XIII.

The neceſſity and reaſonableneſs of patience.

DISCIPLE.

BY all the collections I am able to make from my dear Lord's inſtructions, and the little experience I have of the world, patience ſeems to me a moſt neceſſary virtue; for the condition of man in this life is ſo expoſed to calamities and ſorrows, that, in deſpite of all his endeavours after peace, troubles beſet him every where, and his ſtate is that of warfare and continual ſuffering.

Chriſt.] It is ſo, my ſon; nor is it fit it ſhould be otherwiſe. For thoſe men have a wrong notion of peace, who make it conſiſt in freedom from ſuffering; in either having no troubles, or being inſenſible of any. This is a ſtate, neither attainable by a man, nor accommodated to a chriſtian. The peace, I would

I would have thee aſpire after, is ſuch as conſiſts very well with afflictions. And this is gained when a man hath brought himſelf to that equal compoſure, and reſigned temper of ſoul, as firmly to perſiſt in his duty, and to reſt ſatisfied in the diſpenſations of God, when he thinks fit to try his virtue, by very great and grievous adverſities. If this appear a hard ſaying, think how much harder it will be to endure the torments of hell, and the implacable vengeance of an angry God. Nature, as well as religion, teaches men, of two evils to chuſe the leſs. And this is done, when they ſet themſelves ſubmiſſively to undergo tribulation here, for the ſake of God and a good conſcience; that they may, by ſuch patient ſuffering, deliver themſelves from the dreadful effects of his wrath, and everlaſting puniſhment hereafter.

Now tribulation is a portion diſtributed in common to all the ſons of men; diſtributed in large meaſures, even to thoſe children of this generation, which thou perhaps vainly imagineſt to be moſt exempted from it. For even the gayeſt and moſt proſperous of them all are not without their many and ſore evils. 'Tis true indeed, they take a great deal of pleaſure, indulge their inclinations without controul, and ſo their miſery makes a leſs ſenſible impreſſion upon their ſpirits; but miſeries they have. Or, put the very beſt of their caſe, and ſuppoſe their joys to be without any interruption, their wiſhes without any diſappointment; yet, even thus, how long would their happineſs laſt? Alas, they vaniſh like a dream, and all their proſperity ſoon ſcatters like ſmoak: nay, not only their enjoyments themſelves, but the very remembrance of them periſh in a moa moment. Their life is but a vapour; and death will be ſure to ſwallow up them and their gayeties in ſpeedy and perpetual oblivion.

But this is putting the caſe more favourably than it ever happens in reality: for, even in this life, their plenty and pleaſures are intermix'd with misfortunes, and all their ſweets allayed with a bitter mixture of cares and fears, and inward perplexities of mind. The very objects that miniſter pleaſure, bring pain along with them too. And this is one great argument, how wiſe a providence the world is governed by, that the very inordinacy of thoſe affections, which purſue the pleaſures of ſenſe ſo greedily, ſhould prove a torment to the guilty mind, and embitter thoſe very pleaſures they indulge. Theſe very pleaſures too are ſhort and fleeting, treacherous and deceitful, irregular and exorbitant, a ſhame and blemiſh to human nature; and, if men be not ſenſible of this, that ignorance proceeds from their own inadvertency. Their reaſon is intoxicated with preſent delights, and their minds blinded by vicious habits, by which they degenerate into brutes, ſtupidly abandon themſelves to the tranſitory pleaſures of ſin and luſt, at the expence of everlaſting pains; and conſult the preſent gratification of a vile mortal body, with the ruin of a precious and immortal ſoul.

Go not thou therefore after their exceſſes, nor place thy happineſs in ſerving, but rather in commanding, ſubduing, mortifying thy own inclinations. *Delight thou in the Lord, and he ſhall grant thee thy heart's deſire,* Pſal. xxxvii. For this delight will teach thee, that the happineſs of man conſiſts in inward and ſpiritual ſatisfactions, in the contempt of this world and its empty pleaſures. And the leſs theſe are eſteemed and affected, the greater and more exquiſitely ſweet ſhall thoſe generous and noble pleaſures prove, which reſult from the experience of God's favour, and the permanent comforts of a good conſcience.

But ſtill theſe comforts are not to be had, without much labour, many conflicts, and ſharp ſufferings. For the corrupt inclinations of fleſh and blood, and the confirmed habits of vice, introduce great difficulties; and demand time and pains to conquer. And conquered they may be, by introducing the contrary habits of virtue. The fleſh indeed will recoil, and think it ſelf ill uſed; but reaſon and religion will ſilence thoſe murmurings, and reſolute perſeverance in good works vanquiſh all thy reluctances. The ſubtle old ſerpent will ſeduce and importune thee, but prayer and good thoughts drive the evil ſpirit away; and faſting and holy exerciſe, or conſtant lawful buſineſs, will keep him out. For he never enters ſo eaſily, ſo ſucceſsfully, as when idleneſs ſets open the door, and an empty heart makes room for his wicked ſuggeſtions.

CHAP. XIV.

Obedience to ſuperiors; enforced by Chriſt's example.

CHRIST.

KNOW, my ſon, that the man who refuſes obedience, rejects the grace, and excludes himſelf from the favour of God; and, by ſeeking his own private advantage inordinately, breaks the order, and obſtructs the good of the good of the publick. Diſreſpect and contumacy to ſuperiors, is an infallible mark of rebellious appetites, and of paſſions not reduced to the government of reaſon and religion. Submiſſion therefore is of ſingular uſe, for ſubduing the fleſh and its luſts; and a good preſervative againſt temptations. For the foreign enemy will be more ſucceſsfully oppoſed, when thy domeſtick one is firſt vanquiſhed, and all quiet within. And man himſelf is his own worſt enemy. Nor are his circumſtances ever more full of danger, then when the ſenſitive raiſes inſurrections, and would dethrone the rational ſoul. And, in order to this bringing the inferior faculties to reaſon, an humble opinion of yourſelf is neceſſary; for partiality and pride are the ſource of all the diſorders in thy own breaſt, and all the diſturbance given by unruly men to ſociety, and good government, of all kinds.

And what ſuch mighty merit is there in this ſubmiſſion? What diſparagement can it be thought to thee, who art duſt and vileneſs, when thou remembreſt, that I my ſelf, the almighty majeſty of heaven, and the Lord of all the univerſe; I, who created thee, and the whole world, out of nothing, did yet condeſcend to a ſtate of ſubjection, and appeared in the very loweſt, moſt ſervile, and deſpicable form, for thy ſake, who art nothing? And why, but that ſo thy pride might have no pretence to ſupport it ſelf, after ſo eminent a pattern of humility? Learn then, thou wretch, to humble thy ſelf; and like that earth, of which thou art, be even content to be trampled upon, and trodden under foot: lay thy ſelf, like the ſtreets, to the feet of inſulting men who walk over thee, and never reſt till thou haſt broken thy own perverſeneſs, and art in a conſtant readineſs to comply with every juſt command of all who have authority over thee.

Till this is done, purſue thy paſſions with remorſeleſs indignation, and ſpare them not, till the very laſt remains of pride be abſolutely ſuppreſſed and killed in thy heart. And if thou ſometimes find ill uſage and tyrannical barbarity, yet ſtill conſider, thou art but a man, and ought'ſt not to complain; nay, rather conſider, that thou art a ſinner, in juſtice conſigned over to hell and eternal puniſhment; and let the anger of an offended God, which ſtrictly is thy portion and deſert, check thy reſentments of the inſolence and injuries, the reproachful treatment, and unjuſtifiable hardſhips, which men may ſometimes impoſe upon thee. This wrath of God thou haſt provoked, but I in mercy ſpared thee, I had compaſſion on thy ſoul, and ranſomed it from death by my own blood. And canſt thou think, that no return is due for ſuch mercy? Yes; know, that I require thou ſhouldſt be ſenſible of the aſtoniſhing greatneſs of my love, and ſhew that ſenſe by gratitude and humility; by a modeſt and reſpectful obedience to my repreſentatives here below; and by not diſdaining to ſuffer any ſhame and contempt, any injuſtice and barbarity, when providence and duty call thee to it, which I, thy maſter, thy God, did not grudge to undergo for thy ſake, whilſt converſing in human fleſh upon earth.

CHAP. XV.

God's judgments are to be conſider'd, for our humiliation.

DISCIPLE.

WHEN thou, Lord, uttereſt thy voice in judgments, my joints are looſed, my limbs quake for fear, my very ſoul is in confuſion, and trembles at thy thunder. In the midſt of theſe horrors I begin to reflect, that the *heavens themſelves are not pure in thy ſight*, and that even the *angels* thou *haſt charged with folly*, Job xxv. If then thoſe exalted intellectual ſpirits were not able to ſtand before thee, and kept not their firſt eſtate, what muſt become of ſuch a wretch as I am? If even the ſtars fell from the firmament, how can duſt and aſhes hope to eſcape? They, who did eat angel's food, degenerated from their primitive excellence, and fed on huſks with ſwine; how then ſhould a creature preſerve its innocence, whoſe very original is impure?

This, Lord, convinces me, that there is no holineſs but what is derived from thee alone; no wiſdom without thy governance; no ſtrength a ſufficient defence, if thou withdraw thy gracious protection; no continence or abſtemiouſneſs effectual, except thou guard it; no watchfulneſs againſt the enemy, unleſs thy wakeful eyes keep all our approaches, and repulſe the aſſaults of the tempter. If thou ceaſe to ſupport us with thy mighty hand, the waves ſwallow us up; we ſink and periſh without thee, and with thee walk upon the ſea in ſafety: weak and unſtable are our reſolutions, but thy grace gives ſtrength and perſeverance.

ſtance. Cold and timorous are our hearts, but thou warmeſt them with zeal, and inſpireſt them with courage. *Lift up then, Lord, our hands that hang down, and our feeble knees, that we faint not in this ſpiritual warfare*; and enable thoſe who can do nothing without thee, to conquer all difficulties through thy ſtrength.

I know, O Lord, that if any good thing ſeem to be in me, yet even this deſerves my meaneſt opinion, and will in no degree juſtify my thinking otherwiſe of my ſelf, than as a moſt vile and worthleſs wretch. And therefore, when thy angry juſtice afflicts me, it is my duty, with the profoundeſt humility, to lay my mouth in the duſt, and meekly ſubmit to thy correcting hand. For, though I cannot diſcover all the reaſons of thy myſterious judgments; yet this I find no difficulty to diſcern, that my ſins deſerve ſeverer treatment, and that I my ſelf am nothing, and that I proceeded out of nothing. O the dark abyſs, in which I can find nothing relating to my ſelf, but vanity and nothing! Where then is the preſumption, where the pride, the lofty conceit of my worth and virtue? Whither are all my vain confidences, and towring imaginations fled? Thy judgments, Lord, have ſwept them away like a torrent; and all are ſunk in thoſe unſearchable depths. Theſe ſhew me to my ſelf, and juſtify the prophet's rebuke, *ſhall the clay exalt itſelf againſt the potter that faſhioned it?* Iſa. xiv. *Behold, as the clay is in the hands of the potter, ſo is every mortal man in thy hand, O Lord*, Jer. xviii.

And is it poſſible for that ſoul to ſwell with inſolence and vain conceit, which is duly ſenſible of thy majeſty, and ſubmits to it, with that lowlineſs and reſigned ſubmiſſion which thy truth directs? No, no; not all the voices of mankind, conſpiring unanimouſly in his praiſe, can blow him up to fond conceits of his own excellence, when once his hopes and heart are fixed on God. For he conſiders, that all theſe are but ſo many copies of himſelf; frail and feeble, deceivable and periſhing, emptineſs and nothing. That they, as well as their words, are only air and ſound, and both will quickly vaniſh together; but God and his truth remain for evermore. *Ceaſe therefore from man*, for *wherein is he to be accounted of?* Iſa. xi. and endeavour to have praiſe of him, *who reſiſteth the proud*, but in his own due time *exalteth them*, *who humble themſelves under his mighty hand*, 1 Pet. iv.

CHAP. XVI.

With what reſerves we ought to pray.

CHRIST.

LET this, my ſon, be the language and ſtyle of all thy prayers: *Lord, if it be thy pleaſure, grant me this requeſt; if what I aſk conduce to thy glory, do thou be pleaſed to give and proſper it: Lord, if thou, to whom all things and their conſequences are perfectly known, ſeeſt that this will be for my true advantage, not only beſtow it, but, with it, grace to uſe it to thy glory: but if thou ſee it may prove hurtful to me, do not only deny my petitions, which proceed from ignorance and miſtake; but remove far from me the very deſire of that, which cannot be obtained without my prejudice.*

This laſt is a very reaſonable and expedient requeſt; becauſe many deſires, which ſeem, not innocent only, but even virtuous and wiſe, profitable and praiſe-worthy, in a man's own eyes, are yet neither inſpired by God, nor agreeable to his will: nor is it eaſy to diſcern, whether one be acted by a good or evil ſpirit; or whether, in the matter of his prayers, his own inclination and private reſpects do not determine him. And many a one, who hath fancied the impulſe of divine grace, and perſuaded himſelf, that he hath been directed and acted by it all along, finds the deluſion out at *laſt*; and what he imputed to the ſpirit of God, proves in the end a ſuggeſtion of the devil, or the eager longing of his own vain mind.

The ſureſt way then never to offend God in thy deſires, and to be accepted in thy addreſſes to him, will be to temper all thy inclinations with his fear, and not ſo much as indulge a ſecret wiſh, without ſuch reſervations, as may teſtify an entire ſubmiſſion to his divine diſpoſal. And when thoſe wiſhes break out into words, men would do well to conceive and preſent them in ſuch forms, as may expreſs ſome check upon themſelves, and mighty caution in reſtraining their tongues from aſking any thing in a peremptory manner; but leaving the matter entirely to God's better choice. As thus; "*Lord, thou* "*knoweſt whether the having, or the being denied the* "*matter of my petition, be moſt convenient; and* "*therefore all I beg is, that what thou ſeeſt moſt* "*expedient, may be done*; I aſk, *indeed*, as is my "duty, but I preſume not to preſcribe to thy heavenly wiſdom. Give, therefore, Lord, ſuch things, "and in ſuch meaſures, and at ſuch times, as thou "ſeeſt moſt ſuitable for me. Deal with me as thou "knoweſt is neceſſary: for that I am well aſſured

" is beſt for me, which is moſt agreeable to thy
" will, and moſt conducive to thy glory. Appoint
" me any ſtation, and uſe me as thy own; turn and
" change me, and my fortune, at pleaſure: I only
" beg to be qualified for thy diſpenſations, to uſe
" them rightly, and greatly to improve under them.
" For I am thy ſervant, devoted to thee without
" the leaſt reſerve: I deſire not to live to my ſelf,
" but to thee; oh! that I might be enabled faithfully
" and worthily to perform that homage and
" duty, to all which my heart is moſt freely and
" ſincerely diſpoſed."

CHAP. XVII.

A prayer for grace to do the will of God.

DISCIPLE.

" HEAR me, moſt merciful ſaviour, I humbly
" beſeech thee, and let thy grace be ever
" preſent with thy weak and unworthy ſervant. I
" am not of my ſelf able to do, or think any thing
" that is good. O! let thy ſpirit aſſiſt my weak
" endeavours, vanquiſh the various temptations that
" ſo powerfully aſſail me; fix my inconſtant mind,
" and follow me all the days of my life, that I may
" perſevere in good works unto the end. Regulate
" my affections and deſires, and confine them to ſuch
" objects only, as are well-pleaſing to thee. Let
" thy will be the guide and meaſure of mine, and
" let mine ſteadfaſtly conform to thy pleaſure. Re-
" move far from me all inclinations and averſions,
" but ſuch as agree with thoſe of the bleſſed Jeſus.
" Help me to die daily to the world, and to the
" things of the world; and mortify my vanity to

" that degree, that even ſhame and contempt for
" thy ſake, may be not only ſupportable, but wel-
" come to me. Let all my hopes and wiſhes center
" in thee alone; and nothing appear deſirable, in
" compariſon of a pure heart and a good conſcience.
" For thou, O Lord, art my peace, thou my only
" reſt; in thee alone is pleaſure and true ſatisfaction,
" and all without thee is miſery and torment. Oh!
" grant me this bleſſed retreat, this happy ſecurity,
" that I may abandon all the falſe appearances of
" happineſs here below, and find eaſe and endleſs
" repoſe in thy love and favour, thou true, thou chief,
" thou eternal good, of all pious ſouls."

CHAP. XVII.

God is our only comfort in trouble.

DISCIPLE.

WHATEVER comforts and happineſs I propoſe, this is not the time, and place of enjoying them, but I expect that bleſſed fruition in another ſtate. For what would it avail, could I attain the utmoſt delights the world can afford, when a very ſhort ſpace of time muſt of neceſſity put a period to them? Do not then miſtake thy own happineſs, oh, my ſoul! for theſe things are not, cannot procure thy reſt. The fulneſs of joy and undiſturbed pleaſure is no where to be found, but in God only: he is the comforter of the afflicted, he is the wealth of the poor, he is the ſupport and ſtrength of the weak, he is the glory and everlaſting rewarder of the humble.

Nor let it annoy thy peace, or diſcourage thy hope, that thou canſt not yet aſpire to thy promiſed felicity,

felicity. For God is faithful and cannot lie. Only wait his time patiently, and thou ſhalt not fail of his mercy, and an abundant recompence of thy faith and patient truſt in due ſeaſon. But if this delay draw off thy affections to preſent comforts, and abate thy zeal for future and diſtant rewards, thou ſhalt deſire earthly bleſſings, and not be filled; and at the ſame time ſhalt loſe thoſe heavenly and eternal joys, which alone can ſatisfy, and make thee happy for ever. *Uſe* then theſe temporal things, but *love* none but the things that are eternal. The preſent were not deſign'd for enjoyment, but for neceſſity and convenience. Thy nature is not cut out for them, nor is it in their power to make thee perfect; tho' all this mortal ſtate is capable of, were united together for that purpoſe. For God alone is good, large enough to fill the deſires of an immortal ſoul; he only is proportion'd to thy wants and noble faculties; and the happineſs to be met with in him, is not that tranſitory, imperfect thing, which the children of this generation fondly covet and admire; but that exquiſite, that infinite and inward delight, of which the pure in heart, and ſpiritual perſons, receive ſome ſweet foretaſtes and pledges, by having their converſation in heaven, while they themſelves are upon earth. For man is vain, and all his comforts like him; empty and unſatisfactory, falſe and fleeting, ſwift in decay, and verily of ſhort continuance: but thoſe from God reſemble the perfections of their author, ſpiritual and true, immutable, infinite and eternal. A truly pious ſoul can never be deſtitute, becauſe he conſtantly bears his happineſs about him, even the bleſſed Jeſus, the divine comforter; and, when bereaved of all beſides, can thus converſe cheerfully with him in the profoundeſt ſolitude.

Bleſſed be thy mercy, O deareſt Jeſus! Bleſſed be thy reviving preſence! O let me never be deprived of this ineſtimable bliſs! While I have this conſolation within me, I feel no want of earthly enjoyments; for this ſupplies and exceeds them all. Oh! let me thankfully rejoice in thy favour, and the light of thy countenance ſhining upon me! Or, if at any time thou withdraw thoſe bright beams, and interpoſe a cloud of ſorrow; yet even then preſerve me from ſad diſtruſt, and let the conſideration of thy will, which is always beſt, be my ſupport in my moſt gloomy and moſt melancholy circumſtances. Let me not caſt away my hope and confidence, becauſe thou hideſt thy face for a ſeaſon; but help me to diſcern the great wiſdom and benefit of ſuch trying diſpenſations, and to ſupport my faith with the proſpect of that reward, which is laid up in heaven for thoſe, upon whom patience hath its perfect work. For thou, O Lord, art gracious and merciful, and though we perpetually offend and provoke thee, yet wilt *thou not always be chiding, nor keep thy anger for ever*, Pſal. ciii. but wilt turn again, and in much compaſſion revive thy ſuffering ſervants, that they may rejoice in thee, and triumph over their calamities.

CHAP. XIX.

Of caſting our care upon God.

CHRIST.

MY ſon, be content, that I ſhould diſpoſe of thee and all thy affairs, as my divine wiſdom ſees fit; for I beſt know what is convenient for thee. Thou judgeſt raſhly, and art liable to human frailties. Senſe and preſent ſatisfactions blind thy eyes, and byaſs thy underſtanding; but chriſtians, who ſhould walk by faith, and not by ſight, muſt not be govern'd by the ſame meaſures, which common men make uſe of, in diſtinguiſhing good and evil accidents.

Diſciple.] Lord, I acknowledge my infirmity; and am ſenſible, that thy care and concern for me is more prudent, more tender, than that I have for my ſelf. And he hath made but a ſmall progreſs in the ſchool of Chriſt, whoſe weak faith is ſtill to learn that leſſon, of being ſatisfied with all thy diſpenſations, and caſting his care upon thee. All therefore that I beg, is the eſtabliſhing my heart in the way of thy commandments; and, ſo long as I ſwerve not from truth and righteouſneſs, ſecure my ſoul, and, for the reſt, do thy pleaſure. For thou art wiſe, and juſt, and good; and ſuch, I am ſure, are all the methods of thy providence; though human underſtandings may not diſtinctly perceive, nor be able to account for the conſequences of them. If therefore thou condemn me to darkneſs and affliction, I will praiſe and thank thee for thy deſerved correction, even in the midſt of my trouble. Or, if thou ſpareſt the rod, and makeſt my darkneſs to be light, I will then thankfully receive the bleſſing, and magnify the favour which I know I do not deſerve.

Chriſt.] This is indeed, my ſon, the diſpoſition and deportment befitting the character and conduct of my faithful children. And all, who profeſs to walk with me in piety and virtue, muſt bring themſelves to a ſoul ſo even, ſo reſign'd, that ſuffering and joy, poverty or riches, may be entertain'd alike. The one, without murmuring or complaint; the other, without the leaſt pride or change of temper. For both are equally the appointment of my providence, and, as ſuch, ſhould be met with chearfulneſs and perfect content.

Diſciple.] Lord, I am willing to endure whatever thou art pleaſed to lay upon me. I do deſire to receive good and evil, the ſweet and bitter, the comforts and the croſſes of this life, with the very ſame reſentments of mind. Nay, not only to receive, but to be thankful for both, ſince both come from thy own hand, which cannot err in ordaining all my events. This only I implore, that, in all changes of condition, thou would'ſt in thy mercy preſerve me from ſin: for, while I keep my innocence, and continue in thy love, not calamity, nor death, nor hell itſelf, ſhall make me afraid. However thou may'ſt exerciſe my patience, or frown upon me at preſent; yet ſo long as thou doſt not caſt me off for ever, nor blot my name out of thy book of life, I am above all danger; and the utmoſt power, and malice of fortune, and enemies, and devils combined together, can never hurt me.

CHAP. XX.

Chriſt our pattern of patience in affliction.

CHRIST.

MY ſon, remember I came down from heaven for thy ſalvation; I bore the puniſhment due to thee, and all the miſeries, to which human nature was and is expoſed. I bore them, not by conſtraint, but choice, and urged by no neceſſity, but that which powerful love induced me to. And one great end, for which I condeſcended to do ſo, was to teach thee patience by this example; and, that my willing ſufferings might diſpoſe thee to ſubmit to the neceſſary incumbrances of thy preſent condition, without reluctance and murmuring. Sorrow became familiar to me! Sorrow was my conſtant attendant from the manger to the croſs! For every hour produced ſome freſh inſtance of it. My circumſtances were low, and I contented my ſelf with the want of even the neceſſaries of life; my innocence was ſlandered, and daily complaints and reproaches were ſounding in my ears; ſhame and contempt I entertain'd without return or angry reſentment; my good deeds were repaid with malice and ingratitude, my miracles blaſphemed, and my doctrine traduced and vilely miſrepreſented.

Diſciple.] Yes, Lord, I read the hiſtory of thy invincible meekneſs with wonder and aſtoniſhment; and cannot but infer from thence, that, ſince thou wert pleaſed to give ſuch amazing proofs of an entire obedience to thy heavenly father's will; I, who am a wretched ſinner, and not only ſubject to theſe miſeries by the condition of my nature, but one, who have deſerved them as chaſtiſements for my tranſgreſſions, am much more obliged, with an entire ſubmiſſion, to receive whatever thy providence thinks fit to inflict; and muſt by no means repine at the weight, or the continuance of any burthen thou ſhalt lay upon me in this preſent world. If any thing here ſeems heavy, yet it is rendred much eaſier and more ſupportable, by the aſſiſtance of thy grace, by the contemplation of thy example, and by the many patterns of conſtancy and virtue, which thy now glorious ſaints, but once afflicted ſervants, who travelled the ſame rugged journey of life, have in all ages ſet for my imitation and encouragement. I plainly ſee, under this Goſpel-ſtate, a mighty ſupport, which even thy own peculiar people wanted under the old law. For then the way to heaven was dark, and the proſpect at their journey's end leſs glorious and inviting. Few then applied themſelves with zeal to ſeek a future and ſpiritual kingdom; nor could they do ſo with equal encouragement, till thy meritorious death had opened an entrance into the high and holy place. But how contentedly, how thankfully, ought I to tread in thy bleſſed ſteps, ſuſtained by the aſſurance of eternal rewards, and directed in the right way by the light of thy doctrine? For thou *art the way, the truth, and the life*, John xiv. Thy afflictions have taught me, and all believers, that tribulation is the paſſage to thy heavenly kingdom; and that the proper method of attaining thy crown, is being made a partaker of thy croſs. Had'ſt thou not gone before us, who would have the heart to follow? Who could perſevere in a courſe of ſufferings? Nay, tho' thou haſt thus ſhewed us the way, yet how unwilling, how backward are we to follow ſtill? And, if neither thy miracles, nor thy precepts, thy wondrous humiliation, nor thy glorious exaltation, can warm us into greater zeal and reſolution, than by lamentable experience we daily ſee and feel they do; how wretchedly ſlothful, alas! how cold, and motionleſs, ſhould we have ſtood; had not thy grace and wonderful condeſcenſion vouchſafed to grant us the advantage of ſo clear a light, and the prevailing motive of ſo bright an example?

CHAP. XXI.

Of bearing injuries; and how we may judge of true patience.

CHRIST.

CEASE thy complaints, my ſon, and, when afflictions threaten to attack thee, call to remembrance what I endured for thy ſake; nay, not what I endured for thine only, but what ſo many brave and generous ſaints have ſince courageouſly endured for mine. Alas! thy tryals yet are ſmall, nor haſt thou reſiſted unto blood, as I and they have done. Their difficulties were greater, their temptations ſharper, their ſorrows more piercing, their exerciſes more ſevere; and yet in theſe they were more than conquerors. It will therefore be of great ſervice to the confirming thy hope and patience, if thou doſt diligently compare thy very light, with their much heavier burthen; and reproach thy ſelf for ſinking under a weight, which they wou'd ſcarce have felt. But, if thy own load ſeem ſo unſupportable, and thou canſt hardly be brought to think the caſe of others ſo much more deplorable; conſider, whether this falſe eſtimate does not proceed from partial affection, tenderneſs to thy ſelf, and a fretful impatience, rather than from the true nature and reaſon of the thing. For theſe corrupt men's judgments, and make them ſee their own and other peoples circumſtances with very different eyes. But be thy ideas true or miſtaken, yet ſtill the greater and the leſs calamities call equally for ſubmiſſion and conſtancy. And it is not the degree or meaſure, but the author and the conſequence of ſuffering, which is the proper motive to patience.

Now the better thou art compoſed under any trouble, the more commendable is thy wiſdom, and the larger will be thy recompence. Nay, not only ſo, but the eaſier will be thy lot too. For conſideration will reconcile thee to it, and time and experience make it familiar. Nor matters it much, who are the immediate inſtruments, or from what next hand thy afflictions come. For thoſe are very idle pretences, which men uſually labour to cover their want of temper withal: "Had this been done by "an enemy or a ſtranger, I could have born it; "but from a friend, a relation, one whom I have "highly obliged, and have a right to expect better "uſage from, what fleſh can bear ſuch baſeneſs and "ingratitude? Had I given any juſt occaſion for "that diſparaging report, it would never have vexed me; but to be ſlander'd and abuſed, without "any ground, without the leaſt fault or provocation "of mine, I think it's very hard: the thing it ſelf "I could away with; but the perſon and the particular circumſtances, put me out of all patience." Alas! theſe are nice and frivolous diſtinctions, ſuch as are altogether foreign and impertinent to the matter

ter in hand; and what the virtue of patience is no way concern'd in. For this takes injuries and affronts by the great, without entering into any particular examination of their nature and quality, and peculiar aggravations; nor does it at all regard the perſon by whom it is done, but conſiders that perſon only by whom it is to be crowned.

No man hath yet arrived to a due perfection in this grace, who is not content with any kind of tryal, from any hand whatſoever. The differences of friend or foe, of ſuperior, inferior, or equal; of a good-natur'd and conſcientious, or a wicked, perverſe, vexatious man, are of no conſideration at all. But, let the provocation be what it will, and come from whom it will, let it be offered but once, or repeated never ſo often, 'tis all alike. Becauſe in all the over-ruling hand of God is attended to; and every thing received, as ordained and originally inflicted by him; and what proceeds from him is always good, and ſure to turn to a profitable account. And, as nothing he appoints, though ſeemingly never ſo grievous, ſhall be to good mens diſadvantage; ſo nothing, though never ſo ſlight and deſpicable in it ſelf, when dutifully and decently entertained, ſhall be paſſed over unrewarded. Arm thy ſelf therefore for combat, and decline no occaſion of engaging that offers, if thou deſireſt the glory of the conqueſt. Without fighting thy way thro', there is no coming at the crown. And they, who refuſe to ſuffer with Chriſt, do in effect, and by neceſſary conſequence refuſe to reign with him. Stand up then bravely to afflictions, and quit thy ſelf like a man. Repoſe and happineſs is what thou coveteſt, but theſe are only to be obtained by labour,

bour. Victory and triumph are the things thou aimeſt at: but who was ever yet ſo abſurd, as to think of triumphs without enemies and hardſhips, or of conquering without a battle?

Diſciple.] I acquieſce, dear Lord, in all thou ſay'ſt; nor will I indulge ſuch vain imaginations. But ſince even where the ſpirit is moſt willing, the fleſh is miſerably weak; aſſiſt me, I beſeech thee, that by thy power and ſtrength I may be able to do, what by my own I cannot accompliſh, and even nature is averſe from ſo much as attempting. Thou knoweſt full well, how little I can bear; how every ſhock makes my feeble heart give ground; Lord, do thou ſupport and confirm me, that tribulation may appear, not only tolerable, but even deſirable, in compliance with my will and my duty. For, what regret ſoever humanity may betray in theſe caſes, when danger approaches; in my own better judgment, which conſiders things in the chriſtian and ſpiritual ſenſe, I am abundantly ſatiſfied, how much the harſher diſpenſations of thy providence conduce to my ſoul's advantage. And, tho' *no chaſtiſement for the preſent ſeems joyous, but grievous,* yet my better ſenſe, when I think freely, convinces me of thy wiſdom and mercy, and that it is *even good for me to be afflicted.*

CHAP. XXII.

The infirmities and miſeries of our preſent ſtate.

DISCIPLE.

I WILL confeſs my unrighteouſneſs unto the Lord, Pſal. xxxii. and bewail my infirmities before him. For every trivial accident caſts me down, and I am often overwhelm'd with ſorrow, upon occaſions which my calmer thoughts abundantly convince me, deſerve rather my contempt, than my ſerious concern. Sometimes I ſee and condemn my own folly; and fixed reſolutions I make, how bravely I will behave my ſelf for the time to come; and yet, upon the next aſſault of ſome ſlight misfortune, this imaginary hero is beaten from his poſt, and cannot ſtand the ſhock of a very common difficulty. The pooreſt and moſt deſpicable events are, I find, capable of becoming great and dangerous temptations; and I, who at a diſtance defy them, yet, when brought to the trial, feel, by ſad experience, upon how ſlippery ground I ſtand.

This is indeed the wretched condition of thy poor unſtable ſervant: but, Lord, do thou, in compaſſion and mercy, look upon my frailty, for thou knoweſt it more perfectly than I my ſelf can. Stretch forth thy hand, and draw me out of theſe deep waters, and out of this mire of ſin and weakneſs, that I ſink not in my corruption, *Pſ.* lxiv. I cannot eaſily expreſs the melancholy reflections, the ſhame and confuſion, the indignation and ſad perplexity of heart, which the conſciouſneſs of my own inability to reſiſt temptations, and the inconſtancy of my beſt and moſt vigorous purpoſes produce;

duce; and, tho' my will be not always vanquiſhed, nor do I (bleſſed be God) yield to every wicked ſuggeſtion; yet the repeated aſſaults of the enemy diſturb my quiet, and I am weary of a life, which conſiſts of continual hazard, and painful conflicts with my ſelf. The wretchedneſs of my condition is but too manifeſt: I need no other argument to prove it, than that eaſy acceſs evil thoughts find in my breaſt. Which, in deſpight of all my watchful care, and moſt manful ſtruggles, are much ſooner inſinuated, and received, than either driven out, or prevented from entering again.

Look down then, thou almighty rock of *Iſrael*, and lover of ſouls, and interpoſe thy power and protection; give ſeaſonable ſuccour, and happy ſucceſs to my too fruitleſs endeavours. Arm and guard me with ſtrength from above; and ſuffer not the old man, the corrupt inclinations of my fleſh, which refuſes to be entirely ſubdued and brought to reaſon, to uſurp any dominion over my better part. For this obſtinate rebel renews its inſurrections daily, and bids me battle; calls me to combats and hazardous engagements, which muſt never, never end in perfect peace and ſafety, ſo long as this miſerable ſtate of mortality endures. Moſt miſerable indeed! ſince every action and accident of my life involves me in freſh dangers; ſince every ſtep I take is upon ſnares and precipices; ſince every time and place is cloſely beſet with troubles and toils, with treachery and temptation, and a numerous hoſt of enemies ready to devour and ſwallow me up. For fatal uninterrupted ſucceſſions of trials every moment renew their attacks; and when I have happily vanquiſh'd many, and fondly promiſe my ſelf a truce, as many more immediately aſſault me, and make fiercer and more furious attempts upon ſome other quarter, which I hoped had been ſufficiently guarded from their approaches.

And can a life, ſubject to ſuch ſurprizes and hazards, embittered with ſo many troubles and ſevere trials, incumbred with ſo much frailty and corruption, be valued and eagerly coveted? Nay, can that deſerve the very name of life, which naturally breeds plauges and diſeaſes, and expoſes us to ſuch variety of deaths? Yet inconſiderate man hugs, and embraces, and eſteems it his only happineſs; expects eaſe in the midſt of diſtraction, purſues joys in a valley of tears, and vainly ſets up for the boaſted perfection of pleaſure, in a condition of inevitable miſery, and lingring certain, pain. Sometimes indeed the tender ſenſe of ſome afflictions cuts us to the heart, and in our melancholy moods, we give the world hard words; call it *deceitful*, *treacherous*, and *vain*; but even they who rail at it moſt liberally, and profeſs to hate and deſpiſe it, cannot be prevailed with to be content to leave it. The fleſh and its affections have ſtill a powerful influence, and ſpur men on to the purſuit and love of thoſe very enjoyments, which reaſon and their own experience have taught them, cannot be worth their pains, nor in any degree anſwer their deluded expectations. For we muſt obſerve, that our love and hatred of this world proceed from very different cauſes and principles. *The luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, and the pride of life*, 1 John iii. engage our affections; and theſe are ever preſent, and ever vehement with us. The calamities and griefs, and pains we feel, provoke our hatred and contempt, and repreſent life a burden and miſery; and theſe have their intervals, and work upon us feebly and by fits. The former too ſtrike in with inclination, and are aſſiſted by Nature; the latter have no influence upon us, but what their own weight gives; all their impreſſions are forcible and violent, heavy and painful, and ſuch as we ſubmit to, only becauſe we cannot help it.

Thus ſenſe and ſinful pleaſure get within us, and, which is very lamentable, debauch our reaſon. The preſent pleaſures of the body cheat the mind, and vitiate our palates to that degree, that, being prepoſſeſſed with a falſe taſte of worldly ſweets, we have no reliſh left for that delicious entertainment, with which God and religion delight and feaſt the pure and heavenly-minded ſoul. For, O! thoſe happy men, who have learnt to deſpiſe and abandon earthly things, and conſecrated themſelves entirely to God, by mortification, ſelf-denial, and a ſteddy courſe of ſevere virtue; theſe exalted ſpirits know and feel the truth of God and his promiſes; they find unſpeakable joys and ſenſible delights, in the voluntary refuſal of thoſe toys and baits, which cannot be had with ſatisfaction, nor coveted with ſafety. They ſee, and deſpiſe, and pity, the folly of abuſed mankind; diſcover the lurking frauds of the tempter; and, that the imagined happineſs, and boaſted pleaſures of ſenſual and earthly men, are only ſnares and dangers, vanity and cheat.

CHAP. XXIII.

Of placing all our hope aud happineſs in God.

DISCIPLE.

REPOSE thy ſelf, my ſoul, in God, upon all occaſions, and above all other dependances; for he is the only ſure refuge, the eternal reſt of the ſaints. Grant me thy grace, O ſweeteſt, kindeſt ſaviour, to value, and love and truſt in thee, above all things. Make me to prize thee far before health and beauty, to deſire thee more than honour and worldly preferment, more than riches and power, more than wit and learning; to rejoice in thee more than in pleaſure and proſperity, more than in reputation and praiſe, more than in the largeſt promiſes, the higheſt deſerts, the moſt exalted gifts, the moſt tranſporting joys, which thou canſt impart, or my heart when moſt enlarged, is able to receive. Let me admire thee above angels, and arch-angels, and all the hoſt of heaven; above all things viſible and inviſible, more than all that is, or can be, which is not thy own moſt excellent ſelf.

For thou, my God, art the beſt and moſt excellent being; in thee alone is plenty and fulneſs, ſweet refreſhment, peaceful comfort, and permanent delights; the perfection of beauty and endearing graces; true honour, and adorable greatneſs; in thee as in its proper center, all good meets, and dwells, and hath and doth, and will, continue to abide, from, and to all eternity. Give then thy ſelf, my deareſt Jeſus; for all thou giveſt, and all thou promiſeſt to give beſides, is poor and little, when compared with the preſence and fruition of thee. And I have found, by long experience, that all thy other favours, nay, all nature is too ſhort and bounded to ſatisfy my ſoul; whoſe unlimited deſires exalt and ſtretch themſelves far beyond all preſent enjoyments, and can be filled, and reſt contented, with nothing leſs than thee.

O my beloved Lord, and king of the univerſe, knit me to thee with the bands of an entire and holy affection. Releaſe me from this clog of earth, and give me wings of ardent zeal, and pure devotion, that I may mount aloft, and take my flight higher than heaven it ſelf, and find my reſt in thee. Oh! when will that happy time come, when I ſhall be ſet at liberty from ſin and corruption, from this body and this world, and without interruption, without allay, and taſte and feaſt upon the ſweetneſs of my God? When will the neceſſary cares of this life ceaſe to diſtract me, and leave me power and leiſure to indulge thoſe longings and pleaſures, which refined and unbodied ſpirits feel; when ſwallowed up in the contemplation of thy divine excellencies, and even raiſed above themſelves, they know and love, and retire wholly into thee? At preſent I am oppreſſed with a load of infirmities and corruptions, and often groan under the Senſe of my heavy burthen. The inward joys, with which thy grace ſupports me, are mingled and tinctured with pains and tears; which cloud, and darken, and deject my mind; diſtract my thoughts, obſtruct my eagereſt wiſhes and endeavours, and faſten me down to earth and miſery, when I would fly to thy embraces. I can not in this vale of ſorrow enjoy my Lord, my love, as I could wiſh; but wait with hope, and long grievouſly for that happy Change, which ſhall tranſlate me to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, and render me partaker of their bliſs. But let not, Lord, my ſufferings, and tears be loſt; remember and commiſerate preſent wretchedneſs, and grant my ſighs an eaſy and effectual acceſs into thy bleſſed preſence.

Thou, Lord, art the brightneſs of thy father's glory; dart thy reviving beams into my ſoul; enlighten its dark place, and diſſipate its diſcomforts. To thee the very thoughts and inmoſt deſires of every heart are known; by thee the moſt ſecret and ſilent wiſhes are thoroughly underſtood. O hear me, when I ſpeak in this language, and pour out my ſupplications in ſighs and tears which words cannot utter! Even when my tongue lies ſtill, my thoughts are in exerciſe; and my heart within my breaſt burns with inarticulate ejaculations. "How long (ſay I to my "ſelf) how long will my Lord, my Bridegroom de"lay his coming? O! that he would vouchſafe to "enter under the roof of his unworthy and afflicted "ſervant! O that he would ſtretch forth his almigh"ty hand, and deliver this wretch, juſt ready to "ſink, out of all the miſery and trouble, which "ſurround, oppreſs, and are ready to devour him! "Come, Lord Jeſus, come quickly, for without "thee, no day, no hour, is eaſy or comfortable; "for thou art my hope, my joy, and all my worldly "plenty; but without thee is the very extremity of "poverty and diſcontent.

See how I lie in this priſon of the fleſh, fettered and bound up with the chain of my Sin, till the pitifulneſs of thy great mercy looſe me, and the light of thy countenance, breaking into this darkſome dungeon, aſſure me of thy favour and friendſhip. "Let others covet and ſet their affections upon ſuch "wretched objects, as deluded ſenſe thinks valuable;

" but, as for me, I will love and long for only thee, " my God. For thou, my God, alone, art my hope " and happineſs; the only ſtay of my preſent, and " the only bliſs of my future and eternal ſtate. " Such is, and ſuch ſhall ever be my addreſs and fervent ejaculations; nor will I let thee go until thou bleſſeſt me; till thou inſpireſt new life with thy favour; and dwelleſt in, and converſeſt familiarly with my ſoul, by thy ſpirit and gracious preſence.

Chriſt.] Behold me here, my ſon, always attentive to thy prayers, always ready to extend the comfort and relief thou ſo zealouſly requeſteſt. Thy tears and fervent deſires, the ſorrows of thy perplexed heart, and the ſtrong cries of a wounded conſcience, have pierced the ſkies, and brought me down to thy ſpeedy ſuccour and comfort; for I am ever nigh to ſuch as be of an humble and contrite ſpirit, and am ready always to hear the prayers of my ſuffering ſervants.

Diſciple.] I did indeed preſume, in the anguiſh of my ſoul, to beg what I am ſenſible I cannot deſerve, and flee to thee, my God, for help. And lo! I am ſincerely diſpoſed to forſake all and follow thee. Nor will I aſcribe to my ſelf the glory of ſo zealous, ſo reſign'd a temper: for thou, Lord, didſt work this good thing in me, and, by thy own, thy preventing grace, kindle and excite my very firſt deſires. I prayed, but thou preparedſt my heart. I ſought thee, but it was by thy impulſe and direction. And for this firſt diſpoſition, I return thee my moſt humble and unfeigned thanks; acknowledging it thy beſt, thy ſole gift, that I have been able ſo much as to think or intend any good thing. Since then the whole of what I do or deſire well is thine, my part ſhall be to cheriſh every holy motion, to improve the early and happy aſſiſtances of thy grace, to ſubmit my ſelf without any reſerve to thy holy guidance, and, in the midſt of the very beſt performances thou qualifieſt me for, conſtantly and humbly to remember my own vileneſs and impotence. For who, O Lord, is like unto thee? Or what in heaven or earth, which hath, or boaſts of, any excellence, can be compared unto my God and Saviour? Thy works are juſt and true, thy precepts right and equitable, thy providence great and glorious, and all things are govern'd by it, after a moſt wiſe, and holy, and good and wonderful manner. All honour, and glory, and praiſe, be therefore aſcribed to thee, eternal wiſdom of thy eternal father: May heaven, and earth, and all the creatures, ſet forth thy excellencies, and in this general concert I will join; my mouth ſhall ſing thy aſtoniſhing works, thy great glories; and I will never ceaſe to praiſe and magnify my God, while I have any being.

CHAP. XXIV.

A thankſgiving for God's mercies.

DISCIPLE.

OPEN *thou the eyes of my underſtanding,* O Lord, *that I may ſee* and obey *the wondrous things of thy law*: give me the perfect knowledge of thy will, and poſſeſs me with a reverent and thankful ſenſe of all thy goodneſs and loving-kindneſs to me and to all men; that I may ſhew forth thy praiſe, and publiſh thy mercies. I know theſe are ſo numerous and great, that I can never magnify them worthily: the leaſt of them exceeds my ability to expreſs; and when I conſider them, I am ſo far from any vain pretence of merit, that all my thoughts are overpower'd and loſt in wonder. For all our advantages of mind and body, of perſon and fortune, thoſe which are endowments and ornaments of nature, and thoſe which exalt and ſupply the defects of nature, are all the effects of thy bounty and beneficence; *from whom every good and perfect gift cometh*, James i. 17.

Thou art the common ſource, the univerſal repoſitory, from whence our benefits are derived. Not to all in equal proportions, 'tis true; but, be the meaſure leſs or more, 'tis ſtill diſtribution, He who receives moſt is indebted for the whole to thy liberality; and he who hath leaſt, could not have had that little but from thee. He to whom thou haſt dealt thy bleſſings moſt plentifully, is not from that diſpenſation to take an eſtimate of himſelf; his plenty will not juſtify any confidence or boaſt of his own merit, nor may he inſult over his brethren, or behave himſelf indecently, and diſeſteem or deſpiſe thoſe, from whom thy mercies have diſtinguiſhed him. For the greatneſs of mens deſerts is moſt eminently diſcovered, by a modeſt and mean opinion of themſelves, courteſy and condeſcenſion to others, gratitude and devotion towards God. And the more they are ſenſible of their own wants and unworthineſs, the better they qualify themſelves for freſh and greater demonſtrations of thy love and liberality. Again, the man to whom thou haſt diſtributed more ſparingly, muſt not repine and be diſcouraged, nor fret and grudge the larger portion of his wealthier neighbour; but keep his eyes and mind wholly intent upon thee, and admire the freedom of thy grace, which, as it cannot be obliged to any, ſo gives to all largely, and without partial reſpect of perſons.

For thou art to be praiſed in all thy gifts by every man, becauſe all comes from thee: and thou art maſter of thy own favours; thou giveſt without upbraiding, and with-holdeſt without injuſtice: thy wiſdom knows what meaſures are proper and expedient for each perſon; and the reaſons, why one man differs from another, lie not within the compaſs of our knowledge, but muſt be left entirely to thy judgment, to determine the fitneſs of them.

In this perſuaſion, Lord I readily acknowledge and adore thy mercy, in ſuffering me to want many of thoſe advantages, which the generality of mankind ſet a mighty value upon. Nay, I am ſatisfied, that men ought to be afflicted, and humble their ſouls, with the conſideration of their own wants and unworthineſs; yet ſo, as not to give way to ſad deſpondencies and diſtruſt of thy mercy; but even from this very ſubject to draw matter of comfort and joy; becauſe thou haſt ſo particularly declared thy affection to the contrite and humble ſouls, and given them marks of more than ordinary favour.

Such were thoſe apoſtles, ſo mean in their own and the world's eſteem, whom thou madeſt choice of for witneſſes of thy truth, and attendants upon thy perſon. Theſe very heroes in the chriſtian ſtory, whom thou haſt appointed judges and rulers of the whole world in matters of religion, were recommended to that high promotion, by being meek and poor in ſpirit, void of guile, and mortified to the world; patient in ſuffering, content with inſolence, and barbarous treatment; and proud of nothing, but being thought worthy to endure ſhame and pain for the name of Jeſus. So diſtant from common men, ſo ſingular were their notions, which diſpoſed them with joy and eagerneſs to embrace what others dread and deteſt, and ſhun with all their might and induſtry. The unexhauſted ſpring of joy and comfort which they who truly love and fear thee, and are thankful for thy infinite goodneſs, find within, flows from the conſtant reſignation of their minds to thy diſpoſals, and the reflections upon thy wiſe eternal purpoſes, which check their proneneſs to partiality and diſcontent, and make every diſpenſation of thy providence welcome to them. They are degraded with equal ſatisfaction; as others are exalted: and regard not high or low, honourable or deſpiſed, according to common reputation; but conſider that their ſtation and circumſtances in the world are choſen and ordained by thee, and cannot therefore but be good, nay, better than any other, becauſe they are the effect of thy divine appointment, which always knows and chuſes the beſt.

Could we but once arrive at this conſiderate temper of mind; the different accidents of life would ceaſe to be either uneaſy, or extravagantly pleaſant. The violent ſhocks upon our paſſions would be effectually prevented; becauſe thy honour would take place above our own appetites and miſtaken intereſts. Poverty and ſhame would be acceptable, as coming from the ſame hand with riches and honour. And even thoſe things which are moſt agreeable to the reliſh and inclinations of human nature, would pleaſe and comfort us more, with the conſideration of their being beſtowed by thee, the author of all our happineſs; than upon the account of any benefits to be had from the things themſelves. The zeal for thy honour, in the extremity of diſtreſs, ſhould ſupport good men more, and find greater regard from them, than all the wealth, or glory, or other external bleſſings, which here thou at any time doſt or canſt confer, upon the moſt proſperous of the ſons of men. So ſmall is the conſideration of the greateſt gift, in compariſon of the wiſe, the good, the almighty giver and diſpoſer of our fortunes; who orders all things for the beſt, and is, in all, our kindeſt friend, and conſtant benefactor.

CHAP. XXV.

The things which make for peace.

CHRIST.

HEARKEN to me, my ſon, and I will inform thee in the right way to true peace and perfect liberty.

Diſciple.] Be pleaſed, Lord, ſo to do; for ſuch inſtruction will prove both acceptable and profitable to me.

Chriſt.] Make it thy buſineſs rather to comply with the reaſonable deſires and commands of others, than to indulge thy own inclinations. Chuſe a moderate, nay, a low fortune, rather than greatneſs and abundance. Be humble, obedient, and condeſcending in all thy behaviour. Let this be thy conſtant wiſh and prayer, that God would perform his pleaſure, aud diſpoſe of thee and all thy affairs, as to him ſeems moſt convenient. The man that brings himſelf to this temper and ſpirit, be aſſured is in the ready way to peace of mind, and true contentment.

Diſciple.] The words my Lord hath ſpoken are few in number, but full of ſenſe, and of very comprehenſive extent; and I can eaſily diſcern in this little ſpace the grounds of great perfection in virtue. Did I but diligently obſerve theſe rules, how happily would all exceſſive concern, and violent diſorder at any accidents of human life, be ſuppreſs'd, or totally prevented? And if at any time hereafter I find my ſelf oppreſſed with immoderate cares or reſentments, thy wiſdom hath taught me to diſcover the true cauſe of my trouble; and, that I ſuffer for neglecting to comply with this doctrine. But ſuch compliance, Lord thou knoweſt, is not the work of nature and meer reaſon: and therefore I implore the powerful aſſiſtances of thy grace, to which nothing is hard, for making thoſe improvements, which, in the preſent ſtate of corruption, are to fleſh and blood impracticable. Nothing is more acceptable in thy ſight than the conqueſt of our infirmities, and ſucceſsful advances, in goodneſs. Put forth thy hand then, and what thou haſt taught me to know, enable me to perform; that I may both approve my own obedience, and (what without thee I cannot do) invariably purſue my own happineſs and ſalvation.

CHAP. XXVI.

A prayer againſt evil thoughts.

DISCIPLE.

GO *not far from me, O Lord, my God, make haſte to help me,* Pſal. lxx. For corrupt imaginations are perpetually riſing in my breaſt, and innumerable fears and Horrors cloſe me in on every ſide, The ſenſe of my hazardous condition overwhelms me with Torment and deep diſtreſs, while I ſee the greatneſs of my danger, and the multitude of my enemies, but know not how to decline the one or to fight my way thro' the other.

Chriſt.] Remember, ſon, my promiſe; *I will go before thee, and make the crooked places ſtrait; I will break in peices the gates of braſs, and cut in ſunder the bars of iron : and I will give thee the treaſures of darkneſs, and hidden riches of ſecret places.* Iſa. 14.

Diſciple.] Lord, ſince thou haſt applied thoſe myſtical words to my comfort, let me, I beſeech thee, experimentally find the gracious accompliſhment of them in my own perſon; and ſcatter all my dark and diſmal, my vain and ſinſul thoughts, by ſhedding the light of thy grace abroad into my heart. For in the extremity of grief and anguiſh, this is my hope and only ſupport, that I may take ſanctuary in thy goodneſs, to repoſe all my confidence, and caſt the burthen of my cares upon thee; to pour out my whole ſoul before thee, and wait with patience thy own good time, for ſuccouring me in, and giving me a happy iſſue out of all my afflictions,

CHAP. XXVII.

A prayer for ſpiritual illumination.

DISCIPLE.

SHOOT forth, O bleſſed Jeſus, the bright beams of thy heavenly and eternal light, that it may enlighten all the dark corners of my heart, and effectually ſcatter every cloud of ignorance and error, which now hangs ſo thick over me. call home my wandring thoughts, and repel the temptations which ſo furiouſly aſſault me. Fight thou my battles, and ſubdue thoſe fierce wild beaſts, thoſe brutiſh luſts, which range in this deſert, and are ever ſtriving to devour me; that by thy power the wilderneſs may be turned into a palace, and inſtead of the violent cries and howlings of raging paſſions, no ſounds may be heard there, but ſongs of praiſe. Thou *Lord, who commandeſt the winds and the waves, and they obey thee, mark* i. ſilence the ſtorms within my breaſt; ſay to that troubled ſea, *be ſtill*, and immediately there ſhall be *peace* and a profound *calm*, *ſend out thy light and thy truth*, and warm this barren ſoil; for ſuch am I, till fructified and impregnated by the ſun of righteouſneſs. Pour down thy grace upon me plentifully, and water me with thy refreſhing moiſture, which like ſeaſonable ſhowers and gentle dew, may fatten my ſoul, enable it to bring forth generous fruit in great abundance. Raiſe and refine my mind, preſt down the droſs of earthly deſires, and draw my affections up to heaven and heavenly objects; that a true reliſh of that bliſs above may give me a diſguſt and loathing to all the nauſeous pleaſures here below. Deliver, or rather ſnatch me away with a holy Violence, from all the periſhing comforts of this mortal ſtate; for thirſt of happineſs I find is greater than any creature can either quench, or in a good degree aſſwage. Unite me to thy ſelf with the inviolable bands of holy love; ſo ſhall my ſoul be ſatisfied; for thou alone canſt anſwer all my longings, and the whole world without thee is a trifle, and emptineſs, and nothing.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Againſt a buſy inquiſitive temper.

CHRIST.

MY ſon, have a care of indulging a curious humour, and do not create to thy ſelf unneceſſary troubles, by meddling with matters of perſons, which are no part of thy concern. For what is this or that to thee? *follow thou me.* What have you to do with the virtues or vices, the conduct or the indiſcretions of others; how they behave themſelvs, what company they keep, or with what diſcourſe they entertain one another? Why all this eager and intemperate zeal to vindicate or accuſe them? Your ſhall not anſwer for their miſcarriages, nor be one whit the better for their excellencies. Your own words and actions are the only things you will be called to account for. Therefore look well to them, and beware, leſt this buſy and malicious impertinence do not inflame that reckoning. Trouble not your ſelf to turn informer, and take not upon you to be a judge. Leave that to me. I know every man throughly, and nothing which is done under the ſun can eſcape my obſervation and inſpection. I am perfectly appriſed of each perſon's condition, ſee every action, nay, every intention, every deſign; and not only what they do, but what they aim at. Theſe things are far removed out of your ſight; and therefore you cannot judge truly, if you might attempt it innocently. But know, once more, that judgment is my prerogative; and therefore it were impudence and uſurpation in you to attempt it, if you were qualified to judge others. Study rather to

be quiet; contain your ſelf within your own buſi
neſs; and let the prying, cenſorious, the vain an
intriguing world follow their own devices. For a
which they ſhall aſſuredly be one day ſummoned t
a ſevere account; for all their arts and ſpecious pre
tences cannot impoſe upon me. Engage not wit
them in the ſame deſigns, nor let the empty phan
tom of a great reputation, the pride of numerou
and honourable relations or acquaintance, or the par
ticular intimacies and friendſhips of celebrated per
ſons, engage your time and thoughts. Theſe onl
ſerve to diſtract and perplex the mind, and che
you at laſt with fond expectations; they lead yo
into a labarinth, and there they leave you loſt an
bewildred. But I would ſhew thee the true wa
and communicate my inſtructions freely, wert th
but at leiſure to receive my ſecrets, and careful
obſerve my motions; by opening the door wher
knock, and watching all opportunities of enterta
ing me in thy heart.

CHAP. XXIX.

Of laſting peace, and true goodneſs.

CHRIST.

THIS was my promiſe to my diſciples her
fore, *peace I leave with you, my peace I*
unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto
John xiv. But tho' peace be in every man's wi
yet the qualifications and prediſpoſitions, nece
for procuring and preſerving it, are the care of
few. My peace takes up its dwelling with the
and humble. And the peace of my ſervants c
in ſteady patience; in attending diligently t

words, and following my directions. Therefore, upon every Occaſion, be ſure to make a conſcience of what you do or ſay: let the pleaſing me be your chief, your only concern; and the fruition of me your ultimate, your only, end and deſire. Paſs no raſh cenſures upon other people's words or actions, and do not affect to be a man of buſineſs, or retailer of ſecrets; for this will be the beſt expedient to make your troubles few and light. I ſay, *few and light*; for to eſcape trouble altogether, and to have no affliction at all in mind, body, or eſtate, is not conſiſtent with the nature of your preſent condition, but one of the privileges reſerved for the ſaints in heaven and immortality.

Do not therefore imagine, that you are in perfect peace, when you are ſenſible of no calamity or diſturbance; or, that a preſent freedom from aſſaults is an argument that you have no enemies, and all is ſafe and well with you; nor, when things proſper according to your heart's deſire, that this is a proof of your extraordinary virtue and perfection; nor, if your zeal and piety be fervent, and your contemplations full of delight, conclude your ſelf a particular favourite of God. For theſe are foreign and deceitful inferences; ſuch as neither prove the ſincerity, nor the degree and perfection, of any man's virtue. This is diſcovered by quite different marks. The devoting and reſigning your ſelf entirely to the will of God; not ſeeking your own, but his glory in every thing you do; conſidering all events wiſely, and receiving proſperity and adverſity with evenneſs of temper; and ſuch a brave unſhaken perſeverance in goodneſs; as, even when the aſſiſtances and encouragements of grace are withdrawn for a ſeaſon, can reſolutely go on, and harden itſelf to undergo yet ſharper tryals with conſtancy; ſuch lowlines of mind, as never puffs a man up with an opinion of his own merit, but in the ſevereſt diſtreſſes can find matter of praiſe and thanks for that mercy, which even then inflicts much leſs than he deſerves to ſuffer; and a firm hope, that God will not forſake his ſervants: this is the way of peace, the way that leads to ſure conſolation and favour with God. And if, not to think highly of your own performances, you can add that other excellence, of deſpiſing yourſelf, and abhorring your own vileneſs, then be aſſured your peace is built upon ſo ſolid, ſo impregnable a foundation, that no mortal man here on earth is capable of attaining to it in greater perfection.

CHAP. XXX.

True freedom of mind.

DISCIPLE.

THIS is indeed the utmoſt perfection mortality can aſpire after, to abandon all worldly thoughts, and without interruption keep the mind upon the buſineſs of the Soul, and heavenly contemplations: to paſs thro' a life thick ſet with cares and troubles, yet free and unconcerned. Provided ſtill this unconcernedneſs proceed not from ſtupidity, heavineſs of Apprehenſion, or ſlothful neglect; but from a generous liberty of ſoul, by which the man gets looſe from all immoderate deſires, and a too paſſionate love of earthly enjoyments. This faculty I earneſtly covet, and beg thee O my God, to protect me againſt the cares of the world, leſt the neceſſities of my body employ me too anxiouſly; and, under that pretence, my affections become enſnared, and ſo I entangled in multiplicity of buſineſs, to the prejudice and neglect of better and weightier concerns; or, leſt I be enticed to ſin by the deluſive pleaſures of ſenſe, or diſcouraged from the ſteady purſuit of virtue and heaven, by too tender and afflicting reſentments of any calamities which may befal me.

I ſpeak not now of thoſe vain ſuperfluities, which the deluded world ſo vehemently contend for; but beg to be preſerved in theſe miſeries and dangers. For miſeries and dangers I cannot but eſteem the common and unavoidable incumbrances of life; ſince theſe are heavy, and cling cloſe about the ſoul, and put it under ſuch a ſtrait confinement, that it cannot freely obey the diſpoſitions it feels within, of getting above concern for the world, and fixing its deſires and endeavours upon ſpiritual objects. Thou, O my God! art ſweetneſs inexpreſſible. But, that my ſoul may truly reliſh thee, rather turn, I beſeech thee, all my worldly comforts into bitterneſs, than ſuffer them to vitiate my palate, and give a diſguſt to heavenly things, by any deluding charm of preſent pretended good. O! let not fleſh and blood prevail in their conflicts with the ſpirit; let not the world and its fading glories cheat me into ruin; let not the ſubtle enemy of ſouls ſupplant me with his tempting deluſions. Give me courage to reſiſt, when called to the combat; patience to endure, when called to ſuffering; firmneſs of mind to perſiſt immoveably in my duty, when temptations and evil ſuggeſtions endeavour to ſeduce me. Exchange, if it be thy Will, the tranſitory and falſe comforts of this world, for the oil of true gladneſs, the aſſiſtances and ſweet ſatisfactions of thy bleſſed ſpirit; and, inſtead of carnal love, and ſenſual inclination, let the love and deſire of thee be diffuſed thro' my whole heart, and reign there unrivall'd.

Even food and raiment, and the neceſſaries by which life is ſuſtained, are a grievance and obſtruction to zealous and purified ſouls. But what muſt be a burthen, let me not make an occaſion of ſin; by uſing the creatures intemperately, by a luxurious indulgence, or an inordinate appetite. Nature, I know, it is my duty to ſupport; and therefore, entirely to refuſe and neglect theſe proviſions were ſin and ingratitude. But to enlarge our deſires beyond the proper uſes of theſe things, and let them looſe upon ſuperfluity and vanity, delicacy and delight: this the law of God hath moſt wiſely forbidden; becauſe it were in effect to connive at all licentiouſneſs, by cheriſhing the fleſh, and animating and ſupporting it in inſolence and rebellion againſt the ſpirit. Between theſe two extremes there lies a ſafe medium, in which I humbly implore the guidance of thy ſpirit; leſt I decline from virtue on either ſide, and, going aſtray after my own inclination or unadviſed zeal, forſake my path, and fly out beyond the meaſures thou haſt preſcribed for me.

CHAP. XXXI.

Self-love the greateſt obſtruction to virtue and happineſs.

CHRIST.

SON, if thou aim at purchaſing all, know that it is not to be bought at any price leſs than thy all. Earth muſt be exchanged for heaven; and where

I give myſelf, I expect the whole man without any reſerves. Think not therefore of any private reſervations of intereſt or pleaſure, in bar to my entire poſſeſſion; for all the world cannot do thee greater prejudice, than ſuch-love. This ſticks more cloſe, while other things are looſe and at a diſtance. And all things faſten upon thee, only according as the degree of thy own love and inclination for them gives opportunity and advantage. If your mind and its affections be pure, and ſincere, and moderate, nothing ſhall have the power to enſlave you.

And what pretence can you have ſuffering them to be otherwiſe; for who would ſet his love upon things, which cannot be obtained without difficulty, oftentimes not with it; or, if they be, cannot be enjoyed without danger? Who would court bonds and captivity, and be fond of having that, which will obſtruct his weightieſt concern, and rob him of his liberty? Were theſe conſiderations duly attended to, it would appear prodigious folly, for any man not to reſign himſelf up entirely to me; to conſume his ſtrength with unprofitable vexations, and labour in the fire for vanity, and create troubles, which are in his power to avoid. Obey my will then, and ſubmit all to my diſpoſal, and then thou art out of the reach of the world and its temptations. but if intereſt and private reſpect ſtill govern in thy heart, all thy applications will be in vain. thou runneſt away from troubles in one place, to meet them in another; ſeeking reſt but finding none, becauſe thou always carrieſt thy torment about thee. For, even in thy moſt ſucceſsful attempts, there will be ſomewhat wanting to give thee compleat ſatisfaction; and in thy moſt private retirements thou wilt be diſturbed and haunted by ſome croſſes. The world, and its advantages, can do thee no real good by being enjoyed, but by being ſlighted and deſpiſed. This is the caſe, not of riches only, but of honour and reputation too: for they alſo make themſelves wings, and fly away; and thou canſt never be ſafe or happy, but by mortifying thy ambition and vain-glory.

How many people pleaſe themſelves with fond imaginations of eaſe and leiſure to be good, in a country, or a college-life? But cloiſters and deſerts ſignify nothing, without the zeal and diſpoſition of an hermit. The convenience of place is very little; and all its boaſted expectations vaniſh, except the man be changed, as well as his reſidence, and manner of living. And this change is not, cannot be effected, unleſs his mind be fixed on me alone, as the proper, the only center of all its affections and deſires. The liberty men enjoin otherwiſe, is very ſhort and unfaithful; for freſh occaſions of ſin and trouble will quickly offer themſelves; and then not only the old inconveniences will return again, but new and greater, and ſuch as are peculiar on that new ſtate of life upon which they have entred: And thus their very refuge becomes a freſh temptation.

CHAP. XXXII.

A prayer for purity of heart, and heavenly wiſdom.

DISCIPLE.

ESTABLISH me, Lord, with thy free ſpirit, Pſal. li. 11. that, being ſtrengthned in the inner man, I may purge my ſoul from all vain anxiety, and baniſh idle fears, and get over the diſcouragement and diſtracting troubles of the world. Let not the raging and impatient deſires of any thing here, though never ſo alluring and ſeemingly valuable, perplex my thoughts, and draw me off from thee. Give me grace to conſider my ſelf, and all below, as things full of vanity, and of very ſhort continuance. For ſuch indeed are all things under the ſun, *vexation of ſpirit*, and *altogether lighter than vanity it ſelf.* And he who ſtedfaſtly looks upon them as ſuch, is the truly, the only wiſe man.

Impart to me, then, O my God, I beſeech thee, that heavenly wiſdom, which may diſpoſe me to ſeek thy kingdom and thy righteouſneſs; to ſell all I have for this one pearl of great price; and to eſteem my ſelf rich in no treaſure but thee, *Matt.* xiii. to love and delight in thee alone; to take Satisfaction in all things elſe, only in ſuch degrees, and in ſubordination to ſuch purpoſes as thou haſt appointed; and to receive every diſpenſation of providence, with ſuch a Spirit and temper as becomes my duty, and may render it ſerviceable to the ends for which thou deſigned it. Grant me ſuch prudence and conduct in all my converſation, that I may decline and deſpiſe the inſinuations of flatterers, and meekly receive the contradiction and reproaches of gain-ſayers and ſlanderers. For this is wiſdom indeed, when a man is not carried about with every blaſt of air; but ſtops his ears againſt the ſyren's charms; and reſolutely proceeds in a ſtraight ſteady courſe of virtue, in deſpight of all the ſubtilty of thoſe who labour to entice, or the malice of them who would terrify, and drive him from it.

CHAP. XXXIII.

How a chriſtian ought to behave himſelf, when men ſpeak evil of him.

CHRIST.

My ſon, if detractors and ſlanderers ſpeak or think ill of thee, let not this diſturb thee. The provocation to impatience and angry reſentments, which ſuch ill treatment uſually miniſters, will be much better employ'd againſt thy ſelf. Take then this caution of improving thy humility, by reflecting how many things, which lie concealed from human ſight, thy own mind is conſcious of; and the more their wicked malice labours to leſſen thy reputation, ſo much the leſs do thou appear in thy own eſteem. If all be well within, and thy heart right with me, the impertinent cenſures of envious men will make no very deep impreſſion. And when theſe reach thy ears, inſtead of recriminating and reſentment, it will be wiſely done to look up to me, and not to be diſordered at any judgment, which men ſhall take upon them to pronounce concerning thee. For why ſhould thy ſatisfaction be placed upon a thing, which makes thee not one whit the better or the worſe? If they commend and cry thee up, thy real merit is not the greater; and if they revile and run thee down, thy innocence is not the leſs. Seek then true honour and ſatisfaction from me, from me alone; whoſe ſentence never ſwerves from truth and equity. And great ſhall thy content and thy quiet be, if thou neither ſolicitouſly courteſt the favour of men, nor ſervilely feareſt their cenſure and diſpleaſure. For, after all the complaints of outward accidents, the true and original ground of all diſquiet is within; for inordinate affections, and vain fears, are the polluted fountain from whence thoſe bitter ſtreams of diſcontent, and perplexed thoughts, and every confuſion and diſorder of a troubled mind proceed.

CHAP. XXXIV.

How God ought to be addreſſed to in time of adverſity.

DISCIPLE.

THE *Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, bleſſed be the name of the Lord,* Job i. 21. Yea, bleſſed be thy name, for this very calamity, with which thy fatherly wiſdom and affection hath now thought fit to chaſtiſe and try me. I cannot flee from the ſcourge of thy rod; but I will fly to thee for ſuccour; and beg, that thou would'ſt aſſiſt me with thy patience, and turn all my ſufferings to my ſoul's advantage. I am indeed in trouble; and cannot but confeſs the preſent diſorder, which this miſfortune gives me. But this is my own infirmity; and *I know not what to pray for as I ought,* Rom. viii. 16. For what ſhall I ſay? *Lord, ſave me from this hour.* No, deareſt father, thou haſt not brought me to this hour, had it not been for thy glory, and my own good. And therefore I will rather beg, that my affliction may continue till thy gracious purpoſes are accompliſhed in me; and, when thou ſeeſt me ſufficiently humbled, that then, and not before, thou would'ſt refreſh, and raiſe, and deliver me out of it.

For my deliverance, I am convinced, can come from no other hand; ſince I my ſelf am weak, and poor, and blind, and know neither what is beſt, or what to do. Grant me then, bleſſed Lord, a reſcue in thy own due time; and in the mean while ſtrengthen me with patience, that by thy powerful aid I may bear up againſt the ſharpeſt tribulations without deſpondency or diſtraction. *Not my will, Lord, but thine be done*, ſhall be the conſtant language of my heart: my ſinful heart, which acknowledges thy mercy in the midſt of wrath, and ſadly reflects, that thou haſt puniſhed me much leſs than my offences deſerve. O that this humble ſenſe of my own guilt may work in me a fixed and contented ſubmiſſion to thy will, that I may neither unduly decline, nor unthankfully murmur at the weight or the length of my ſufferings, till thou ſee fit to compoſe this ſtorm, and reſtore to me the comforts of thy favour and indulgent providence!

For, if the tempeſt ſtill rage, this is not the effect of want of power in thee to calm it; but becauſe a perfect calm is not yet ſeaſonable for me. Thy powerful hand can lay it in a moment; thou canſt abate its fury, or thou canſt protect and ſupport me under its violence and extremity. I know thou canſt; for thou haſt taught me by my own experience, and the remembrance of thy mercies will not ſuffer me to doubt the efficacy of thy power. But, in proportion as my grief and burthen is greater, ſo much the ſweeter and more refreſhing let thy healing virtue, and ſpiritual conſolations be; and let me feel thy gracions promiſe, *that thou wilt not ſuffer thy ſervants to be tempted above that they are able, but* *wilt with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that they may be able to bear it.* 1 *Cor.* x. 12.

CHAP. XXXV.

How the divine aſſiſtances ſhould be ſought, and depended upon.

CHRIST.

I AM that Lord, my ſon, who is the ſtrong hold of afflicted men in the time of trouble, and in whom thou doſt well to take ſanctuary, in all thy adverſities, *Nahum* i. But, if thy comforts make not haſte, thou doſt thy ſelf frequently obſtruct and diſappoint thy own expectations, by deferring thy prayers, and not haſtening to aſk relief. For men generally try all other comforts and remedies firſt, and reſerve me for the laſt refuge, in times of ſuch extremity, when nothing will do them ſervice; and then my honour is concerned, not only to defeat thoſe human contrivances, in which they vainly truſted, but to defer my own ſuccours; and, by making them ſmart for their impious neglect, compel them to acknowledge, that I am the deliverer of them that truſt in me; and that without me no ſuccours are ſtrong, no counſels wiſe, no remedies ſucceſsful. And, if their ſufferings find ſome preſent abatement, this only ſkins the wound, but is no perfect cure; and the pain it aſſwages will return again with doubled anguiſh and rage. For I alone, who gave the ſtroke, can heal it; and, as there is no evil which the Lord hath not done, ſo neither is there any deliverance which the Lord hath not accompliſhed.

But, now that thy applications are made to me, and thou haſt caſt thy ſelf upon my mercy, I will revive thy drooping ſpirits, and thou ſhalt, after this dark diſmal ſtorm, rejoice again in the light of my countenance. For I am ready, not only to reſtore thy former happineſs, but alſo to recompence thy paſt pains and patience, by plentiful additions of more and greater bleſſings. And let not any adverſity, tho' never ſo grievous, prevail upon thy frailty to diſtruſt my doing ſo. For, can there any thing be hard for me? Or am I like deceitful men, who ſooth their dependants up with promiſes, which they never deſign to perform? Have I at any time broken my word? Where then is thy faith, where thy courage? Bear up and with fortitude diſcharge thy duty. For, if thou fail not to qualify thy ſelf for receiving them, grace and conſolation ſhall certainly approach in due time. *If the Lord tarry, yet wait for him,* for he *will ſurely come Heb.* ii. and heal thee. The Load, which now oppreſſes thee, is only laid there, to try thy ſtrength and virtue; nor would it ſo depreſs thee, if thy own folly did not make it heavier, by heaping on anxious cares for the future, upon thy preſent ſufferings. But this is to conſpire againſt thy ſelf, and turn thy own tormentor. *Sufficient to each day is the evil thereof,* Matt. vi. 34. without charging it with additional troubles, which no way appertain to it. Theſe are indeed impertinent and ſenſeleſs at all times; for, how abſurd is it to exalt or deject one's ſelf, by hopes, and fears, and fond and fearful repreſentations of diſtant good and evil, which have not any being in nature, and probably may never be at all? Diſmiſs theſe empty but painful follies; the meer creatures of thy own ſick imaginations,

tions, For ſuch deluſions are a great reproach upon reaſon, and a greater yet upon chriſtianity; when thy mean timorous ſoul is mocked by ſuch airy phantoms, and ſo very eaſily led captive by the enemy's ſuggeſtions. And ſuch are theſe deſponding or ſanguine thoughts of what will be hereafter. Whether it be or not, he matters not; for his buſineſs is to deceive and undo men. And true or falſe hopes and terrors contribute equally to this deſign. The love of preſent good, and dread of approaching evils, are inſtruments of ruin employed by him, with wonderful addreſs; and, if ruin be but the conſequence, the methods and management of it are altogether indifferent to him.

Do not therefore ſuffer fear to deject thee, but ſtill maintain thy chriſtian courage, and place all thy confidence in my mercy. I am always ready at hand, when thou ſuppoſeſt me at diſtance; and, at thoſe times, when all is given for gone, things are ſo far from deſperate, that proſperous events and moſt ſurprizing comforts are breaking in upon thee, like a glorious ſun from an aſtoniſhing eclipſe. 'Tis raſhneſs therefore to conclude affairs in a loſt condition, becauſe ſome croſſes have thwarted your expectations: nor can either thy own reſentment of misfortunes within, or the violence of any calamity without, give thee ſufficient grounds, from the terrible appearance thy preſent circumſtances have to pronounce, that all hope of eſcape and better days are paſt. Nay, which is the moſt ſenſible moſt deplorable caſe of any, if at the ſame time that I ſcourge thee with outward calamities, thou feeleſt the inward ſupports of my grace withdrawn, which ſhould enable thee to bear the rod; yet even ſo, think not thy ſelf forſaken, or that I have totally caſt thee from my preſence. The way to heaven is ſet with briars and thorns; and they, who arrive at the kingdom, travail over craggy rocks and comfortleſs, deſerts: and more it is for their advantage to have their virtue awakened, and brightned, and brought to the teſt, by the ſmart of Adverſity; than that all things ſhould go ſmoothly on, without any manner of let or moleſtation.

The heart of man is deceitful, who knows it? Thy very ſelf art often under very dangerous miſtakes, about thy own condition. Thou art ignorant what thou art, and much more ignorant what is fit for thee. But I, who have a perfect underſtanding of both, ſee plainly, that it is proper and beneficial ſometimes to be left to thy ſelf; that thus ſtruggling to ſo little purpoſe with the calamities that bear thee down, thou may'ſt be brought to a juſt and humble ſenſe of thy infirmities; that this ſenſe may check thy vanity, and ſhew, that all thy attempts which prove ſucceſsful, are owing entirely to another hand; and thou art in truth much, very much leſs than that mighty man thou art apt to take thy ſelf for. This makes my depriving thee of thy uſual comforts convenient, but ſtill 'tis in my power to reſtore and augment them to thee, when I ſee convenient.

Nor think me hard and unjuſt in theſe diſpenſations; for who ſhall forbid me to do what I will with my own? I gave thee what thou couldſt not claim; and I take away what thou haſt no right to keep. For *every good and perfect gift is mine*, and not a debt but a favour, *James* i. 17. If then Affliction comes, remember 'tis of my ſending; and I, who laid the croſs, can both remove and recompence it:

I kill and make alive, I bring down to the grave, and raiſe up from it: 1 *Sam.* ii. And, in the inſtant that I lay my thunder by and ſmile again, thy heavineſs ſhall be changed into joy unſpeakable.

In all my dealings I am juſt, in all wiſe, and good; and deſerve not only thy admiration, and attention but even thy thanks and praiſe. Could'ſt thou but rightly comprehend my methods, and the ſecret reaſons of them, thou would'ſt drink up the bitter potion with Joy; upon this very conſideration, that I do not ſpare thee to thy hurt, but ſend afflictions in pure kindneſs to thee, when I foreſee they will be for thy advantage. Obſerve the tenure of my gracious promiſe to my beſt beloved diſciple: *as my father loved me, even ſo have I loved you John* xvi. But both my father's love to me, and mine to them, was expreſs'd, not by falſe and tranſitory Joys, but by ſharp and long conflicts; by being called, not to honours, but to reproaches and diſgrace; not by indulging them in eaſe and ſloth, but by inuring them to trials and difficulties; by calling them, not to reſt and peace, but to bring forth noble and generous fruit with patience. Remember well theſe words, my ſon, and then thou canſt not think much to *drink of the cup that I drunk of* ſo deeply, and to be *baptized with the baptiſm that I was baptized with.* Thou canſt not then deſpair, or think, that God, in afflicting thee, hath abandoned all care and concern for thy benefit; ſince even that tender, that unparallel'd, that unconceivable affection, with which he loved his own dear ſon, hindred not his making that *very captain of thy ſalvation perfect through ſufferings,* Heb. ii. And what art thou? What is the beſt of men in compariſon of him? What are thy agonies and tryals, the very worſt of thine, in compariſon of his?

CHAP. XXXVI.

Of ſeeking God alone.

DISCIPLE.

THY mercy, Lord, is great, which hath thus far enabled me; but ſtill, I feel I want a larger portion of thy grace, which may conduct me with ſafety to ſuch a ſtate of perfection, as may ſecure and ſet me at liberty, from all the obſtacles which the creatures lay in my way. For, ſo long as I retain an affection or concern for any thing in this world, I find my ſoul check'd and reſtrained in her flights to thee and heaven. How often do I make the prophet's wiſh my own, *O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at reſt? Lo, then would I get me away far off*, Pſ. lv. and remain at a diſtance from the world. Now what is more at eaſe, more abſtracted from the world, than a true ſingle-hearted honeſty? What can boaſt of freedom equal to his, who covets nothing upon earth? All created beings ſhould indeed be paſſed over, and left behind in this flight; and a man muſt make a ſtretch even beyond himſelf, and abandon his own natural inclinations and defects, in order to get a diſtinct view of the creator, and thoſe perfections in him, to which no creature bears any reſemblance. Now this is the very reaſon, why ſo few employ their thoughts in heavenly contemplations with any ſenſible delight; becauſe when they attempt it, they do it unſkilfully; by not diveſting themſelves of thoſe worldly affections which damp and diſguſt them in the undertaking.

It is not, I confeſs, an eaſy matter, nay, 'tis not poſſible for fleſh and blood, by its own ſtrength, thus to purge the affections. Nothing leſs than a liberal and very powerful inſpiration of divine grace can thus exalt the mind, and, as it were, carry the man out of himſelf. But, till ſuch exaltation of the ſoul hath diſengaged him from all temporal intereſts, and fix'd down his deſires to that one object worthy of them, God himſelf; all his knowledge and imagined excellencies are very little worth. For, whatever falſe notions of honour and greatneſs men may delude themſelves with, yet, ſtill all ſuch have poor and little ſouls, who dote upon that which ought to be diſdained, and allow any thing, beſides the infinite and eternal God, a very honourable place in their eſteem and affections. For all which is not God, is vanity and nothing, and ought to be nothing regarded. How vaſt a difference is there between the wiſdom of a mortified pious man, enlightened from above; and the pompous learning of a profound and ſtudious divine? That knowledge, which deſcends from above, ſpeaks its heavenly original, by marvellous and noble effects; and works a greater change in the man, a greater improvement in profitable knowledge, than all that comprehenſion, which the beſt capacities, and the moſt indefatigable induſtry, can ever attain to.

We often hear very glorious characters of divine contemplation, and the wonderful delights and tranſports attending it; and theſe a great many appear very fond of. But when they have no regard to the neceſſary preparations for it; their minds are full of ſenſible Idea, and poſſeſs'd with the things of this preſent world; and the ſubduing and mortifying their deſires and paſſions is a matter they take not ſufficient care about. And, while their affairs continue in this poſture, they are in no degree qualified for thoſe exerciſes of the mind. Methinks it is a moſt unaccountable folly, and argues, that men forget what ſpirit they are of, when they call themſelves chriſtians, *i. e.* ſpiritual perſons, that have ſolemnly renounced the world, with its vanities, and the fleſh, with its ſinful luſts; who profeſs to believe and to ſeek happineſs in a future ſtate, and to place that happineſs in the perfection of their ſouls; and yet, in reproach and contradiction to thoſe profeſſions, ſuffer body and ſenſe to run away with them; lay out themſelves entirely upon periſhing and paltry advantages, while the ſubſtantial and everlaſting are wretchedly neglected, and their ſouls ſo perfectly forgotten, that they ſcarce afford one ſerious thought to this moſt important concern. Or, if at any time they ſet themſelves to think, ſome trifle preſently interrupts and withdraws their mind from any profitable recollections. Nay, they themſelves fly out, and are glad to be diverted from a ſevere examination into their own ſtate; which is ſure, if diligently purſued, to preſent them with objects of ſhame and ſorrow, ſuch as will wound their thoughts and ſoon make them weary of this neceſſary work. Thus we never trouble our ſelves to obſerve which way our inclinations are diſpoſed, or whither they tend; nor do we ſeriouſly bewail the abominable impurity of our one Hearts, though there be nothing but impurity there. *The way of all Fleſh is corrupt upon the Earth*; *Gen.* 6. And that univerſal corruption, ſaith the

ſcripture,

ſcripture, brought a flood to deſtroy mankind and every creature. But whence, do we think, proceeds ſuch corruption of manners? From the corrupt affections of men, no doubt. For, if this fountain be not ſweet, the action, which is but a ſtream and emanation from it, muſt of neceſſity be bitter and imperfect. For a pure heart is the ground-work of a holy life; and as naturally ſprings from it, as the fruit from the tree.

And herein we are greatly blameable, that ſo little regard is had to the diſpoſitions of the heart; without which no true judgment can ever be made, either of our ſelves or others. But this, which is in truth of greateſt conſequence, the very point upon which a man's whole character turns, ſeems to be laid aſide, as a thing too nice and ſpeculative to be very curious about. We fix our eyes upon the outward action, conſider what, or how much a man hath done; but with what ſincerity, with what zeal, with what honeſt intention he did it, or whether with none of all theſe qualifications, we trouble not our ſelves to make ſtrict enquiry. So again, for the eſtimate we make of perſons, they are all foreign from the true and proper foundation of merit and reſpect. The riches, valour, beauty, judgment, wit, eloquence, a good ſtyle, or a ſweet voice, or a ſkill of management in town or country-buſineſs, his preferments, or his profeſſion, theſe we immediately take care to be informed of, and proportion our value and reſpects accordingly. But a man's humility and poverty of ſpirit, his meekneſs and patience, his devotion and piety, theſe are ſeldom mentioned in the character, or recommended as motives to induce our regard. Thus nature and grace have their different proſpects; and affections. The *former* looks at the outſide of a man, and values him according to things that are not his; the *latter* places all within, and ſets little or no value on external ornaments and advantages. The former builds upon a falſe foundation, ſeeks her ſelf what ſhe eſteems in others, and is oftentimes deceived and diſappointed: the *latter* repoſes her whole hope and love in God, and is neither miſtaken, nor deluded by falſe expectations.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Of ſelf-denial.

CHRIST.

THOU canſt not, *ſon*, be wholly free, till thou haſt firſt attained to ſuch a maſtery, as entirely to ſubdue, and deny thy ſelf. For covetous perſons, and lovers of themſelves, the luſtful, and buſy, and unſettled men, the lovers of pleaſure more than lovers of God, are all ſlaves; vile and unprofitable ſlaves; condemned to fruitleſs and endleſs toil; ſeeking what they cannot find, and contriving what they cannot compaſs; or if they could, what they cannot long enjoy. For every thing, which is not of God, is ſoon brought to nought. Obſerve this ſhort, but certain, Aphoriſm: *Forſake all, and thou ſhalt find all.* Let go deſire, and thou ſhalt lay hold on peace. Conſider this rule diligently, and put it in practice, for practice will explain and prove it to thee.

Diſciple.] This, Lord, is not the work of a ſingle day, a maxim not fitted for weak capacities, but ſuch, as in one ſhort ſentence contains the utmoſt perfection of a pious and reſigned chriſtian.

Chriſt.] And why, *my ſon*, ſhould that perfection affright or diſcourage thee? Call up thy zeal, aſpire to true greatneſs of ſoul, and, the nobler the virtue is, the more eager and generous reſolution do thou expreſs of attaining to it. Oh! that thou wert of that happy diſpoſition, which utterly diſcards all narrow and ſelfiſh conſiderations, and ſubmits itſelf entirely to the obedience of my commands, and the diſpoſals of my providence! ſo ſhould thy perſon and thy behaviour be acceptable to thy God; ſo ſhould'ſt thou enjoy great ſatisfaction, and peace in thy own breaſt. Alas! there are ſtill many things, which muſt be abandoned; many, which till thou haſt ſacrificed to me, the happineſs thou aimeſt at, can never be obtained. Buy therefore of me the pure refined Gold of a heavenly and refined diſpoſition; for that ſhall make thee rich, above all the treaſures of this world. Caſt off the wiſdom of this generation, and do not flatter thy ſelf with their fooliſh imaginations; for they purſue ſhadows, and take delight in vanity and nothing. Remember I have told thee, that the things which are lightly eſteemed, muſt be purchaſed at the expence of thoſe, which this world eſteems moſt precious. For, what is more deſpiſed and mean in common reputation, what more neglected and forgotten, than that true heavenly wiſdom, which renounces all merit of its own; and is content to be diſregarded by the men of this world? This mortified and humble ſtate of mind is what indeed ſome people profeſs, and in words commend; but their practice evidently condemns it, and gives the lie to all their diſſembled applauſes. And yet this wiſdom, poor and deſpicable as it appears to common eyes, is that pearl of great price, for which all other poſſeſſions are wiſely given in exchange: *Matt.* xiii. That hidden treaſure which is always likely to continue hid, ſince it lies low; and few either do, or care to, find it.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

The Changeableneſs of our Temper, and how to fix it.

CHRIST.

DO not, my ſon, depend upon any preſent diſpoſition of mind, with which thou feeleſt thy ſelf affected, for this is fickle and of ſhort duration. Variety and change is what Men muſt be ſubject to, ſo long as they carry the frailties of fleſh and blood about them; and all their endeavours cannot ſo fix their hearts, as to keep them conſtantly the ſame. ſometimes they find themſelves diſpoſed to mirth, ſometimes to melancholy; now they are calm and ſerene, by and by all over diſorder and confuſion; this hour fervent and devout, the next lukewarm and cold; ſtudious and induſtrious to day, ſlothful and unfit for buſineſs to-morrow; ſerious and grave, and thoughtful now; and anon again, gay, trifling, and as light as air. But the truly wiſe man, who is acted by the ſpirit of God, gets above this mutable region of the lower world. He ſuffers not himſelf to be carried about with every blaſt and impulſe of inconſtancy, but ſettles upon the baſis of the one excellent end, which is always firſt and moſt in his thoughts, the port to which he makes, and the compaſs by which he ſteers alll his deſigns and actions. Fot by this method it is very poſſible for a man to continue unſhaken unmoved, by any guſt of inclination from within, or accident from without, The natural changeableneſs of human affections, being yet more improved by mens own voluntary uncertainty, and propoſing no conſtant end or rule to themſelves. Now that intention, which fixes upon God as its only end, will keep men ſteady in their purpoſes; aud deliver them from being the ſport and ſcorn of fortune. And this in ſcripture is ſtiled *a ſingle eye*, becauſe it ever looks and aims but at one Object.

The more intent then that eye is in this proſpect, the leſs diverted from its mark, the firmer and more conſiſtent men are with themſelves: and the leſs Impreſſion does any change of wind or weather make upon ſuch diligent and wiſe pilots. But ſtill infirmity prevails in moſt: and, if ſome pleaſure or profit come betwixt, they retain ſo much tenderneſs for themſelves, and their temporal advantages; as to be diverted from the ſame vigorous purſuit of their firſt prize, and allow this freſh one a part at leaſt of their endeavours and deſires. They love God, but they would love the world too; and in this ſtate of divided affections ſomewhat reſemble the *Jews*; who, as the Evangeliſt obſerves, *John* xii. 9. came to viſit *Martha* and *Mary* at *Bethany*, not only that they might ſee and hear Jeſus, but that they might ſatisfy their curioſity in beholding *Lazarus*, whom he had raiſed from the dead. It muſt therefore be your chiefeſt care and buſineſs, to compoſe this diſtraction of thought, to fix your heart to one purpoſe, to ſeek one good, one end, ſo zealouſly, that nothing elſe may come into competition or partnerſhip with it: to look upon every thing which diverts you from, or cools you in this purſuit, with an eye of Diſdain;

and conſtantly to keep your hope, and deſire, and love (which are the ſpring and guide of all your actions) upon me alone.

CHAP. XXXIX.

The happineſs of them who love God.

DISCIPLE.

IN having God, I have all things. *For whom can I have in Heaven but Thee, and what is there upon earth that I can deſire in compariſon of thee?* Pſal. lxxiii. Oh ſweet and comfortable words! but this is a ſweetneſs which none can reliſh, but they who love the word of God, and *not the world, neither the things that be in the world.* 1 John ii. 15. My God to me is all; I need no more to be added. The men of purified underſtandings find this enough, and they of purified and heavenly affections cannot too often repeat it. When thou art preſent, affliction and death are pleaſant; for in thy favour is life and joy. When thou art abſent, life it ſelf is a burthen; for thy diſpleaſure is worſe than death. Thou makeſt a merry heart and a chearful countenance, in thee is abundance of peace, and a continual feaſt. Thou giveſt me right notions of all events, and rendreſt every accident an occaſion of joy and praiſe to me. Without thee proſperity itſelf is nauſeous, and I loath my very mercies. For nothing here below can pleaſe our palate, unleſs thy favour and wiſdom give it a grateful reliſh. To him that feeds delightfully on thee, every bitter morſel is ſweet; but they who want or ſlight that heavenly entertainment, find the moſt delicious dainties bitter and diſagreeable.

They, who are wiſe for the world and the fleſh, are moſt defective in the true and heavenly wiſdom. The carnal wiſdom ends in guilt and death, and the worldly wiſdom purſues vanity and empty pomp. But they, who are wiſe indeed, conform themſelves to thy example, by a contempt of all earthly greatneſs, and a vigorous mortification of their ſenſual appetites and paſſions; they diſdain the ſhadow, and lay hold on the ſubſtance; paſs from falſhood to truth, and from body to ſpirit. Theſe are the men, who love and delight in God; and find no ſatisfaction in the creatures, farther than as they promote the honour, and ſerve the purpoſes, of their great creator. The joys they adminiſter are ſubordinate and limited: not inherent and natural, but by reflection only; and every thing is eſteemed, in proportion as it tends to its maker's uſe and praiſe. So very unlike, ſo infinitely different, is the pleaſure we feel from the creator and the creature; from the boundleſs ocean of eternity, and the narrow tract of time; from the original ſelf-exiſtent Light, and thoſe faint beams ſhot down on things here below.

Shine then, O light everlaſting, in compariſon whereof, all created lights are but a leſs degree of darkneſs. Convey thy ſelf into my benighted ſoul, purge and diſpel the clouds of error there, purify my polluted affections, cheer my ſadneſs, enliven my ſtupid mind and all its faculties; that I may rejoice and triumph, and baſk in thy bright beams. O! when will that happy, that long wiſhed for hour approach, when I ſhall be filled with thy luſtre, and ſatisfied with thy preſence, and my God be my all in all? For ſure I am, till that bleſſed time, my joys are and will be imperfect. I feel, alas! I feel and lament in my ſelf, ſome remains of the old man ſtill. Scourged he is, but not entirely crucified; wounded and bruiſed, but not quite dead. My fleſh, in deſpight of all my painful labours, continues to luſt againſt the ſpirit; and a domeſtick war diſtracts and breaks the peace and good government of my mind. This cannot exerciſe its juſt dominion without inceſſant broils and tumultuous inſurrections. But, O thou, *who ruleſt the raging of the ſea, and ſtilleſt the waves thereof, when they ariſe*, come ſpeedily to my aſſiſtance, and ſuppreſs this Storm. *Scatter my enemies that delight in blood, and beat them down, O Lord, my defence.* Exert thy mighty power, and get thee honour by this conqueſt. For thou, O Lord, my God art my only hope and helper: O ſave me, or I periſh.

CHAP. XL.

This life is a ſtate of continual temptation.

CHRIST.

DO not ſuppoſe, my ſon, that in this world thou ever canſt be in a condition of abſolute ſafety. Dangers and enemies beſet thee every where. Violence and ſtratagems are perpetually employed for thy ruin; and therefore the weapons of thy ſpiritual warfare muſt never be laid aſide; for uſeful they are, and always neceſſary, during this ſtate of mortality. Cover thy ſelf then with the ſhield of wiſdom and faith; for, if thou expoſe thy perſon without this defence, the fiery darts of the wicked will quickly gall and wound thee. And, if dexterity and diligence in the uſe of thy arms be not animated by a mind fixed intirely upon me, and a vigorous reſolution of enduring the worſt that can happen for my ſake; the engagement will be found too hot, and that crown of the bleſſed, which is the reward of perſeverance, can never belong to thee. Call up thy courage then, and exert thy utmoſt ſtrength, as occaſions of combat ſhall offer. For *to him that overcometh will I give the hidden manna*; Rev. ii. but miſery and deſtruction are the portion of faint-hearted and feeble, unactive and ſleeping ſoldiers.

If then, theſe are the conditions of thy obedience and reward; think how abſurd it is for them who indulge their Eaſe here, or expect peace and happineſs hereafter. In one of the two ſtates enduring muſt be thy lot; and therefore durable patience, and not ſoft repoſe, is what thou ſhould'ſt labour for at preſent. For reſt and undiſturbed content have now no place on earth, nor can the greateſt affluence of worldly goods procure them, but their dwelling is in heaven only, and they are peculiar to the love and fruition of God alone. In obedience to his will, you ſhould contentedly undergo labour and toil, tryals and troubles, diſtreſs and anguiſh of heart, poverty and want, infirmities and diſeaſes, injuries and affronts, ſcandal and reproach, diſparagement and diſgrace, puniſhment and torture. Theſe whet and brighten a chriſtian's virtue, exerciſe and diſtinguiſh him. Theſe thorns are woven into wreaths of glory; and to ſuch faithful ſervants I repay for their ſhort hardſhip an endleſs recompence; and, for the ſhame, which is preſently forgotten, laurels that never fade, crowns always bright, and honours firm and immortal, as my own.

Theſe are the difficulties of the preſent ſtate, which men are to be upon their guard againſt from without. But alas! they muſt not hope always to enjoy peace and ſatisfaction within. No, even the ſaints of old, whoſe purer innocence and eminent virtues might better entitle them to this tranquility, yet often found occaſion to complain, that *their heart was diſquieted, their ſpirit deſolate, and an horrible, dread overwhelmed them*; Pſ. lv. cxliii. Doubts and ſcruples, temptations and fears, and piercing perplexities of heart, are frequently the lot of the moſt excellent perſons. But in all theſe ſtreights the good behave themſelves with meekneſs and patience, repoſing their confidence in God, and humbly diſtruſting themſelves, are ſupported with the hopes of divine grace and favour, to comfort and aſſiſt them; and with the conſideration, that the *ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall be revealed in them.* This was the caſe of thoſe glorious ſaints, who are thy patterns. And, what pretence canſt thou have, to hope for that joy at preſent, which they waited long for, and purchaſed at the expence of ſevere pains and many tears, and great difficulties; and thought themſelves well paid, even thus? Wait then thy maſter's leiſure, quit thy ſelf manfully, baniſh impatience and diſtruſt, perſevere in faith and good works; grudge not to lay out perſon, life, all, for the ſervice and glory of God; and doubt not, but I will one day abundantly reward, and in the mean time I will ſtand by thee to ſuſtain and deliver thee in every danger and calamity.

CHAP. XLI.

Of deſpiſing the vain cenſures of men.

CHRIST.

MY ſon, repoſe thy ſoul upon God, caſt all thy care there, and let it be thy great and only concern, to approve thyſelf to him. When this is done, a man ſhould not much regard what the world thinks of him, nor fear the cenſures of others; while his own conſcience bears teſtimony to his piety and and innocence. To be ill thought of, is ſometimes for thy good; it conforms thee to the image of thy ſaviour; and if thy ſoul, like his, be meek and humble; if thou ſeek not thy own glory, but his that ſent thee; the affliction will not be very grievous to be born. The opinions of men are as many and as different as their perſons; the greateſt diligence and moſt prudent conduct can never pleaſe them all. And therefore even St. *Paul* himſelf, than whom none ever laboured more to recommend his actions to the good acceptance of the world; *He who became all things to all men*, 1 *Cor*. xi. yet found it neceſſary to appeal to a higher court, and declared it *a ſmall thing with him to be judged of man's judgment*, 1 *Cor*. iv. He did his utmoſt to promote the intereſt and ſalvation of others; but even the utmoſt he could do, was not ſufficient to ſkreen him from the invective cenſures, and perverſe miſconſtructions of men. And therefore he removed his cauſe, and referred the whole matter to that God who knew his integrity; and defended himſelf againſt the calumnies and reproaches of licentious tongues, with great humility and invincible Patience. Sometimes he heard and paſſed their ſlanders by in ſilence: at other times he vindicated his own innocence, and reproved the unreaſonable malice of his accuſers: not ſo much in tenderneſs to his own honour, as to prevent an offence which might be taken from his forbearing to do ſo; and leſt the weak and ignorant ſhould conclude, that too obſtinate a ſilence was an argument of his guilt.

But what is there ſo terrible in the condemnation of man? For what indeed is man? He lives and flouriſhes to day; but to morrow he is gone, and his place ſhall know him no more. Fear God then, and his judgment; for this is omniſcient and everlaſting; and the more thou feareſt him, the leſs thou wilt be afraid of any but him. Conſider well what hurt can come to thee by injurious and reproachful treatment. Alas! they who accuſe and blacken thee injuriouſly, are much the greateſt ſufferers by their own malice and injuſtice. Their Slanders and Detractions can have no influence, can make no impreſſion upon the righteous judge above. None to thy prejudice, but a ſad and fatal one to their own. For they cannot eſcape his judgment, who hath declared, that they who *judge ſhall be judged; that they ſhall have judgment without mercy, who ſhew no mercy; and that the ſame meaſure they mete to others, he will meaſure to them again*, Matt. vii. 1 Pet. iv. Keep God then always in thy mind, and let go quarrel and contention, nor embroil thy ſelf in troubles and differences, by being over-ſolicitous in thy own defence. If thou at preſent ſeem to be oppreſs'd with diſgrace and ill reports, which thou haſt not deſerved; bear them contentedly. Blemiſh not thy innocence by too deep a reſentment; nor take off from the brightneſs of thy crown, by anger and impatience, and eagerneſs to right thy ſelf. Reflect on me, who once endured ſuch contradiction of obſtinate and implacable ſinners; and am now ſet down at the right hand of the throne of God, *Heb.* xii. Look up to heaven, and remember, there is one, *who can make thy innocence as clear as the light, and thy righteouſneſs ſhine as the ſun at noon-day*, Pſal. xxxvii. One, who will conſider, not only thy infamy and wrong, but thy manner of bearing it; and, the more meek, and more injured thou haſt been, the kinder and more bountiful rewarder thou ſhalt be ſure to find me.

CHAP. XLII.

A chriſtian muſt devote himſelf entirely to God, before he can be happy.

CHRIST.

L*Oſe thy life, and thou ſhalt find it.* Forſake thy ſelf, and thou ſhalt poſſeſs me. Eſteem and have nothing, and thou ſhalt enjoy all things. For I will recompence thee with greater treaſure, and infinitely increaſe thy ſtore, when thou haſt made over into my hands all that thou haſt and art.

Diſciple.] How often, Lord, muſt I repeat this Gift; and what are the inſtances wherein I muſt forſake my ſelf?

Chriſt.] All times, my ſon, are ſeaſonable? and every action, every accident of thy life, furniſhes a freſh and proper occaſion for ſo doing. I can admit of no reſerves, but expect thee ſtript of all, and nothing left which I have not a title to. For how canſt thou be mine, and I thine, except thy own will be renounced in every thing, and no property of claim any longer remain unconveyed over? The ſooner thou executeſt this deed, the better it will be for thee; and the more full and expreſs, the more frank and ſincere thou art in it, the more favourable will be my acceptance, and the more valuable conſideration ſhalt thou receive. Some indeed there are, who pretend to give themſelves; but the conveyance is ſo clogged with proviſo's and limitations, that the title they make is worth nothing. They truſt themſelves to God by halves, and are for making their beſt of the world at the ſame time. Others again do this without exceptions; but then in difficulties and temptations they repent of their bargain, and revoke the grant. Theſe men make no conſiderable improvement in virtue, nor do they taſte the ſweets of piety; which conſiſt in a mind at large from the world, and the friendſhip and familiar converſation of God. But ſuch ſpiritual advantages cannot, in the nature of the thing, be imparted to any whoſe affections are not intirely agreeable, and inſeparably united, to mine. And this requires the total reſignation of a man's ſelf; and the daily offering of his whole *ſpirit and ſoul and body, a holy, lively and reaſonable Sacrifice unto me.* I have often ſaid it, and now repeat it once more, that *he who would receive all, muſt in exchange give all.* Do not then expect, or call in, any thing again; but give freely and chearfully, and depend ſolely upon me without doubts or delays. Me thou ſhalt have in return, and with me perfect freedom and ſaving knowledge. Prevail with thy ſelf to give up all, without intent or power of revocation; and pray earneſtly, that thou may'ſt gladly follow Chriſt in all his ſufferings and loweſt ſtate;

that

that thou may'ſt renounce all property, and throw thy ſelf naked into his embraces; that thou may'ſt die to the world at preſent, and by ſo doing, live to me for ever. When this is done, all vain imaginations will be baniſh'd; luſt will diſturb thee no more, nor paſſions ruffle, nor anxious cares perplex thee; exceſſive fears will withdraw themſelves; inordinate deſires will ſlacken and die; ſorrow and diſquiet find no place; and if temptation try, yet can they not moleſt thee.

CHAP. XLIII.

How to govern one's ſelf in the affairs of the world.

CHRIST.

BE ſure, my ſon, to take good heed, that buſineſs and care never get within thee; but whatever conſtraint they may lay upon thy actions, and outward attendance; yet keep thy mind always at its own diſpoſal. Do buſineſs, but be not a ſlave to it; and remember, thy prerogative is, to govern, and not to ſerve, the things of the world. Thou art a *Hebrew* of the ſpiritual ſeed of *Abraham*; aſſert thy native liberty. But why do I call thee a free-born ſon of *Abraham?* Thou art a great deal more, *tranſlated out of bondage into the glorious liberty of the ſons of God, partaker of the inheritance of the ſaints in light*, Col. 1. Such birth, ſuch a condition ſhould raiſe and enoble thy ſoul, trample upon the preſent, and graſp at nothing leſs than eternity. Caſt only now and then a diſdainful glance upon this world, as a thing by the by; but keep thy eye immoveable and directly fixed upon heaven, as thy ſure proſpect, and thy main concern. It will not become thy quality to dwell upon trifles, or ſubject thy ſelf to things temporal. Theſe thou muſt make ſubſervient to thy pleaſure, ſubmit and ſerve thy occaſions. For ſo the great creator intended they ſhould, who is the author and lover of order, and would have every work of his contain'd within its proper poſt and ſtation.

If thou at any time art entangled in difficulties, rely not upon human prudence, nor truſt the falſe repreſentations, with which thy ſenſes and worldly affections, or the miſtaken judgment of others ſo diſpoſed, would impoſe upon thee. But remember *Moſes*, and go with him into the tabernacle to aſk counſel of thy God, *Exod.* xxxiii. There thou ſhalt often meet a proper anſwer, have many thoughts ſeaſonably ſuggeſted to thy mind and return wiſer, both for this and the next world, than thou wert before. For *Moſes* always took this courſe in doubtful caſes and important exigences: he made prayer his weapon and refuge, by it he vanquiſhed many dangers, the malice of enemies and wicked men eſcaped, detected their deviliſh deſigns, and retorted the miſchiefs they intended, back upon their own heads. Now what that tabernacle was to him, thy cloſet and thy conſcience are to thee. Neglect not then by any means to conſult this oracle, and implore the directions and aſſiſtances of divine grace. For the ill conſequences of acting according to thy own will without theſe precautions, are intimated to thee, by that inſtance of *Joſhua* and the *Iſraelites*: who are expreſly ſaid to have been deceived by the *Gibeonites*, to their great detriment, becauſe they gave too eaſy credit to their flattering fair pretences, and engaged in a league without firſt enquiring of the Lord, *Joſh.* ix.

CHAP. XLIV.

Againſt too great eagerneſs in buſineſs.

CHRIST.

MY ſon, commit thy affairs to my care, and I will in due time bleſs them with a proper, and profitable iſſue. But wait with patience till that appointed time of mine comes, and do not anticipate the methods of my providence; for I know how to convert every delay to thy advantage.

Diſciple.] Lord, I moſt willingly commit my concerns to thy management, for all that little I am capable of doing, is very inſignificant. And therefore I cannot but wiſh, that this ſenſe, to how little purpoſe all my own pains and contrivances are, might free me from anxious thoughts concerning future contingences, and diſpoſe me determinately to acquieſce in thy wiſe and good pleaſure.

Chriſt.] Alas! my ſon, eager and greedy men covet they know not what; An object at a diſtance engages their deſires; while they ſee only the fair and glittering ſide; but, upon cloſer and more diſtinct view, enjoyment undeceives them, and they grow ſick, even of their own deſires. For their own deſires are various and mutable, and ever turning about to ſome freſh object. It is therefore of ſome conſequence, for a man to forego his own inclinations, even in matters of no great importance. But he who hath attained to the faculty of doing this in any caſe whatſoever, is truly free, and great, above the reach and envy of fortune, and at the higheſt pitch of human perfection. Yet even this man will find his virtues called to the teſt: for the old enemy of ſouls is ever framing ſome ſtratagem to undo good men, and lies in ambuſh night and day, to catch an opportunity of enſnaring unwary ſouls. Let then his diligence excite yours, and be not leſs aſſiduous to ſave, than he is to deſtroy you. For this is the purport of thy Lord's command: *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*, Matt. xxvi.

CHAP. XLV.

In man dwelleth no good thing.

DISCIPLE.

LORD, *what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the ſon of man, that thou viſiteſt him?* Pſal. viii. How can he deſerve to be aſſiſted by thy grace, or ſuccoured by thy favour? What right have I, ſo vile a wretch, eſpecially, to complain unto my God, if he withdraw his preſence, and leave me to my ſelf? Or, if I beg and pray for comforts, what have I to alledge in my own behalf? How can I take it ill, if he rejects my petitions? This I am ſenſible is all I ought to think, or can pretend to ſay, That I have nothing, and am nothing, and in my own nature incline to and purſue after vanity and nothing. A miſerable creature, faint and feeble, incapable of ſo much as one good deſire, till animated and ſtrengthened by thee. Fickle and mutable, ſubject to infirmities innumerable, and continual decays; but thou, my God, art the *ſame, yeſterday and to day, and for ever*, Heb. xiii. Ever happy, and juſt, and wiſe, and good, ordering all things for the beſt, after the counſel of thy divine will. Well would it be, if I was but equally diſpoſed to good and evil; but the corruption of my nature, alas! preponderates ſtrongly to vanity and vice. I eaſily fall from my own ſtedfaſtneſs, and am carried about with every ſhifting ſcene of time, and chance, and paſſion.

And yet thus weak and wavering as I am, thy helping hand can comfort and confirm me. Thy powerful grace, without any human aids, can work wonders in me; can ſtrengthen my reſolutions, ſcatter my fears, and fill my ſoul with reſt and ſweet content. If, when I thirſt after higher degrees of virtue and devotion, or if I fly to thee for ſuccour in diſtreſs, when all other ſuccours fail me, (and all but thine will and muſt prove ineffectual) if then I could but abandon all other hopes, and repoſe my whole confidence in thee alone; then might I entertain ſome expectations of thy favour; then wait with joy, for the chearful returns of grace and comfort from above. For all my ſucceſſes are thy free gift, and I my ſelf a deſpicable wretch, not able to effect any good, not in a condition to merit the leaſt of all thy mercies.

What therefore can I have to boaſt of, who, till I deſpiſe and go out of my ſelf, am not ſo much as qualify'd to receive aſſiſtance from thee? Or how can I deſire the applauſe and admiration of men? What! ſhall I pretend to glory of weakneſs, and inconſtancy, and nothing? This is a vanity beyond example, an extravagance beyond imagination. How fooliſh and abſurd, nay, how hurtful and deſtructive a vice is ambition, which, by undue purſuit of honour, robs us of true honour; and, affecting favour with men, incurs puniſhment and diſpleaſure from God? For he who labours to pleaſe himſelf, is ſure at the ſame time to offend thee; and loſes true ſubſtantial virtue, by coveting empty praiſe. For true honour and virtue conſiſt in glorying, not in our ſelves, but in thee, O Lord; in magnifying, not our own attainments or performances, but thy free grace; and in loving and delighting in nothing, but ſo far only, as may advance thy honour.

Not unto me, therefore, not unto me, but unto thy name be the praiſe, Pſal. cxv. May men commend and extol not my works, but thy power, which inſpired, produced and perfected them: and may this commendation devolve ſo entirely upon thy grace, that not the leaſt part of it may fall upon my concurrence with it. Far be it from me to arrogate any thing to my ſelf; for while I rejoice in thee, I find nothing in my ſelf to glory in, but my infirmities: And in them I will gladly glory; becauſe the greater my weakneſs is, the more viſible and eminent is thy ſtrength, which is ſo conſpicuouſly perfect in it. Let unbelieving *Jews ſeek honour one of another*; but I, who profeſs my ſelf one of the faithful, *will ſeek honour which cometh from God only*, John v. For, what is all the fame, and reſpect, and greatneſs of this world, if put in the balance of the eternal glory, but exquiſite folly, deceitful bubble, and altogether lighter than vanity it ſelf? All honour therefore, and praiſe, all might and majeſty be aſcribed thee, O bleſſed Trinity, my God, my light, my truth, my ſuccour and defence, my refuge and comfort, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

CHAP. XLVI.

Of deſpiſing worldly honour.

CHRIST.

IF thou ſeeſt others grow great in reputation and preferment, while thou art overlooked and deſpiſed, let this, my ſon, be no concern to thee. Look up to me and ſet thy affections and hopes in heaven, and then the neglect and contempt of men will give thee little trouble.

Diſciple.] Were it not, Lord, for the blindneſs and corruption of nature, which makes me fond of vanities and joys I ſhould have juſter notions of theſe matters. For he, who truly underſtands himſelf, cannot but diſcern, that it is not in the power of any thing without, to do him real prejudice; and conſequently, that he can have no reaſonable ground to complain of thy providence, however it thinks fit to diſpoſe of ſuch matters. The conſciouſneſs of my own ſins convinces me, I have deſerved, that all the creatures ſhould conſpire and make War againſt me. To me belongs ſhame and confuſion, but to thee only honour and praiſe is due. And thou haſt taught me, that to bear contempt, and hatred, and barbarous treatment, with humility and patience, is the only method of attaining inward peace, and true ſatisfaction; the virtue which muſt recommend me to thy Favour; the beſt prediſpoſition for light and grace; and the ſureſt and cloſeſt band of union with thyſelf.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLVII.

Happineſs is not to be had, by the favour or friendſhip of men.

CHRIST.

HE that deſires to be happy, by the affection or acquaintance of the beſt, the greateſt man alive, will always find his mind unſettled and perplexed. For even the beſt and greateſt are but mortals; and the effectual Remedy againſt immoderate concern for their being taken away from thee, will be to court the favour of an eternal and immortal friend. Now, the leſs confidence any man repoſes in any earthly comfort, ſo much the more he ingratiates himſelf with God. The better he acquaints himſelf with his own vileneſs, and the leſs he is in his own eyes, the higher he riſes in God's eſteem. But they, who fancy any thing that is good or meritorious in themſelves, put an effectual bar to divine grace. For this is given to the humble, and the ſpirit of God chuſes the contrite heart for the place of his peculiar reſidence. Would'ſt thou abandon ſelf-conceit, and wean thy heart from all fondneſs for the creatures, it is not to be imagined what comforts, what overflowing Joys, I would infuſe into thy ſoul. But, while theſe employ thy thoughts and deſires, thou art diverted from all higher objects, and by being too intent upon his works, loſeſt and forgetteſt the almighty maker. Learn then to ſubdue thy own will, that thou may'ſt clearly underſtand, and readily comply with mine. For any other object, tho' never ſo trifling and inconſiderable in its own nature, yet, if unduly valu'd, and immoderately loved, corrupts the mind, and checks its aſpiring after the chief, the only good.

CHAP. XLVIII.

Againſt vain, and pompous learning.

CHRIST.

DO not my ſon, ſuppoſe, that the excellence of a man conſiſts in ſubtilty of wit, or delicacy of expreſſion. For the kingdom of God does not lie in elegance of ſpeech, or fineneſs of parts, but in innocence of life and good works. Let my words be thy principal ſtudy; for theſe awaken attention, inlighten the underſtanding, kindle a holy zeal, excite true contrition, and heal the wounds they make, with the ſpiritual balm of grace and ſubſtantial comfort. Let not growing wiſer and more learned be the end thou propoſeſt to thy ſelf in reading; but read, that thou may'ſt be qualify'd to practiſe, and let thy knowledge be manifeſted by ſubduing thy vices and paſſions. For this is improvement indeed, and will turn to better Account, than the niceſt and moſt diſtinguiſhing ſkill, in all the controverſies and difficult points, that ever employed the tongues and pens of wrangling logicians, philoſophers, and divines. And when thou haſt run thro' the whole extent of learning, yet all will turn at laſt upon one ſingle point; and the whole profit of thy pains lies in a narrow room.

If thou wilt be known indeed, learn of me; for I am the only maſter that teach men knowledge. I give more perfect, more ſublime underſtanding to babes, to the humble and ſincere, than all the celebrated ſons of art have ever been able to do. And thoſe whom I inſtruct, grow truly wiſe, are preſently enlightned and refined, and by an aſtoniſhing proficience in virtue,outſtrip all in the admired ſcience of morality. Moſt wretched are thoſe vain men, who with infinite toil and time, lay themſelves out upon the unprofitable curioſities of human wiſdom, and take no pains to inform themſelves in their duty to me. The hour alas! draws on apace, when their maſter Chriſt ſhall come with terrible pomp,and call each man to a ſtrict account, and ſound every conſcience to the bottom. Then *ſhall Jeruſalem be ſearched with Candles*; *Zeph.* i. then ſhall the hidden things of darkneſs be brought to light; and no man's eloquence or ſubtilty of arguing ſhall do him any ſervice, before that all-ſeeing Judge. I raiſe the meek, and man of mean ſenſe, in an Inſtant; and teach him at once the grounds of eternal truths, better than a courſe of many years ſpent in laborious ſtudy, and the moſt exquiſite methods of ſchools and univerſities. I bring men to right apprehenſions of things, without any noiſe of words, without the formality of ſyſtems, or vain oſtentations of caviling ſophiſtry, or methodical diſputing. Of me alone men learn to deſpiſe the world, to think things preſent below their pains and care, to love and ſeek thoſe that are heavenly and eternal,to refuſe honours, to bear injuries and Affronts to truſt and hope in me alone, wiſh for nothing but my Favour, *and to eſteem all things but Droſs and Dung, ſo they may win chriſt.*

Some diſciples of mine have made ſuch wonderful improvements under me, as even to ſpeak things above human comprehenſion; and grown wiſer in ſolitude and cloiſters, than any converſation of learned men, or volumes and libraries never ſo carefully peruſed, could have made them. But this is not every man's caſe; for I do not communicate to all alike. Some I inſtruct in common matters, others in abſtruſe and peculiar notions. And as the meaſure and quality of the matter, ſo the manner of imparting it, is very different. To ſome I have ſhew'd my ſelf in figures and parables, dreams and myſtick repreſentations; to others I have reveal'd the moſt important Secrets in the moſt clear intelligible Method. Books ſpeak alike to all, but all are not qualified to be taught by them alike. But I, inſtead of dead letters preſented to the outward Senſes, perform my buſineſs within, I fill the mind with truth, ſuit my ſelf to each man's genius and capacity, ſearch every corner of the heart, underſtand their moſt retired thoughts, inſpire good deſires, promote and finiſh thoſe deſires by bringing them to action, and deal to every one the various gifts of my ſpirit, in ſuch kinds and proportions, as I know to be moſt uſeful and ſeaſonable.

CHAP. XLIX.

Of medling with the world as little as may be.

CHRIST.

IN many things, my ſon, content thy ſelf with being ignorant, and chuſe to live as a man dead, while among the living; as one, whoſe thoughts and affections are crucified to all the world; and all the world to them. Many things are to be overlook'd as if you ſaw them not: thy mind drawn off from the diſtracting variety of objects, and faſten'd cloſe down to the things that make for thy peace and ſalvation.

vation. In controverted points, 'tis much better to content one's ſelf with avoiding erroneous opinions, and their vicious conſequences, and leave others to abound in their own ſenſe, (where their difference from thee does not apparently hazard their ſouls) than to engage in hot diſputes, and ſpend thy precious hours in wrangling and inordinate contention. And even in diſputes, not to be hot and pertinacious; for, if God and truth be on thy ſide, and thou canſt with comfort appeal to thy judge above, thy concern will not be great for victory and approbation below.

Diſciple.] Alas! Lord, what a wretched caſe is this world in? How diſtant from this meek and abſtracted temper of mind? Trifling loſs is ſeriouſly lamented. A little ſordid gain engages mens time, and labour, and thoughts. The day is too ſhort for their vigorous purſuits, and anxious cares break their ſleep; while all their ſpiritual concerns lie neglected and forgotten. Their diligence and ſtudy is determin'd to matters of ſmall or no importance; and the one thing neceſſary is laid aſide, as if it were not worthy a ſingle thought. So vain is man, ſo totally immers'd in ſenſible objects and worldly ſollitudes, and ſo contentedly does he periſh in vanity and vexation, unleſs thy grace make him wiſer, and raiſe his mind to better and eternal concerns.

CHAP.

CHAP. L.

Againſt a fond and eaſy credulity.

DISCIPLE.

LORD, *be thou my help in trouble, for vain is the help of man*, Pſal. cviii. How often have I fail'd of ſuccour, and true friendſhip, when I had moſt reaſon to expect it? How often found it, where I entertained no ſuch expectation? So vain and uncertain is all truſt in men, ſo entirely does the ſafety of good men depend upon thee alone. Bleſſed therefore and for ever admir'd be that good Providence, which orders and diſpoſes all events, to thy impotent and fickle, thy ignorant and perverſe, thy deceitful and deceivable creatures!

Who among all the ſons of men ever behaved himſelf with ſo prudent care, and exact circumſpection, as not ſometimes to be over-reached by treachery and trick, and involved in difficulties and troubles, which the moſt jealous foreſight knew not how to ſuſpect or diſcover? But he, who places no confidence in human ſubtilty, and reſts in God alone, and acts with downright honeſty, and a good conſcience, is leſs ſubject to ſuch inconveniences, than cunning and intriguing men: or, if he be ſurpriſed and impoſed upon, yet is his deliverance generally more ſpeedy and effectual, and his comforts in the mean while more ſenſible and ſupporting. For thou, Lord, never forſakeſt thoſe utterly, who put their truſt in thee. A faithful friend, and ſuch as will ſtand by us in adverſity and want, is exceeding hard to be found; but thou art always the ſame, and no change of circumſtances can change thee, or abate thy affection. Happy is the ſoul that is built upon the rock Chriſt; were this my caſe, the fear of the malicious would not diſtract, nor the reproaches of the envious diſturb me.

But who can foreſee all future inconveniencies, or prevent all that he may foreſee? And, if the ills we are aware of, and provide againſt, are ſo grievous to be born; how much more heavy will be thoſe wounds, whoſe ſmart and terror are doubled by ſurprize? We often blame our ſelves for not being wiſer, and have reaſon to condemn our too eaſy credulity; that eſpecially which eagerly aſſents to the flatteries and commendations of men, and relies upon their liberal profeſſions of friendſhip and eſteem. For, tho' they call and think us angels, yet we cannot but be conſcious to our ſelves, that we are no better than men, frail and wretched men! whom therefore ſhall I believe; whom indeed but thee, O Lord? For thou art truth it ſelf, incapable of deceiving, or of being deceived. But as for men, they are all lyars, weak and unconſtant, frail and treacherous; eſpecially, in what they ſay, ſo exceeding fabulous and vain, that it is a point of prudence to ſuſpend our faith, and thou haſt wiſely taught us to beware of their falſe inſinuations. *Pſal.* cxvi. Thou haſt forewarned us of their treachery and malice, told us, that a Man's *enemies ſhall be thoſe of his own kindred and houſhold*; and that when *men ſay, Lo, Chriſt is here, or lo, he is there, we ought not to believe them*, Mat. xxiv. The truth of theſe Predictions I have learned by ſad experience, and wiſh I may grow wiſer thereby.

Be ſure (ſays one) you keep this private which I tell you; and yet that very man in the next company divulges what he had imparted juſt before, under the ſeal of ſecreſy. From ſuch unſincere dealers as theſe I beg to be delivered, and from their treacherous ways; that I may neither come within their power of betraying and abuſing my confidence, nor injure any who repoſe the like in me; make me then Lord, a ſtrict obſerver of truth, and religiouſly firm to my word: for what I cannot but reſent, when done to me, it never can become me to put upon any other perſon. Silence indeed and forbearing to concern one's ſelf in the affairs of our neighbours, is not only a virtue, but a convenience and a benefit. Caution in crediting, reſerve in ſpeaking, and revealing one's ſelf to very few, are the beſt ſecurities both of peace and a good underſtanding with the world, and of the inward peace of our own minds. Endeavouring to approve our ſelves to the knower and ſearcher of hearts, and not ſuffering every blaſt of idle report, or empty profeſſion, to carry us about, but guarding our converſation carefully, and labouring to conform every thought, word and action to the divine will: theſe are equally a good man's ſafety, and ſatisfaction, and wiſdom. How ſure and calm a retreat does that man make, who chuſes to preſerve thy favour, by eſcaping from pomp and noiſe; preferring thy approbations before the loudeſt fame and applauſe; and willingly abandoning thoſe painted follies, whoſe glittering outſides impoſe upon our ſenſes? Who prefers contrite ſorrow, ſevere virtue, and ſolitary devotion, before the gaudy pleaſures of the world, or that empty admiration, which ambition and vain-glory affect. Praiſe is indeed the conſequence and encouragement of virtue, but it is ſometimes ſo unſeaſonably applied, as to become its bane and corruption too. For the whole life of man is one continual temptation, and we have a ſubtle adverſary to deal with, who loſes no advantage of undoing us. Our praiſes he improves to his own purpoſes, by ſwelling us up with them into pride and ſelf-conceit. And many ſouls have periſhed by that virtue, publiſhed and celebrated, which if unknown and unobſerved, had come to great perfection; and been infinitely happy, by the advantage of ſecreſy and ſilence.

CHAP. LI.

Of truſting in God, when men ſpeak ill of us.

CHRIST.

STand faſt, my ſon, and be not terrified with the ſhock of calumny and reproach, but let me be thy refuge and ſure confidence. Alas! what are words but empty ſounds, that break and ſcatter in the air, and make no real impreſſion? If not report alone, but thy own conſcience too reproach thee; bewail thy guilt, and reform what hath been amiſs. But, if upon examination thou find no ground of accuſing thyſelf, ſtrengthen thy mind in innocence, look upon this injurious judgment as a ſuffering for God's ſake, and bear it accordingly with patience and contentedneſs. He expects that thou *ſhould'ſt reſiſt even unto blood*, when called to it, *Heb.* xii. But how will the man be able to endure wounds and blows, who is not yet a match for verbal affronts? Enquire a little into the true grounds of ſuch impatience, and thou ſhalt find it a ſymptom of a ſoul ſick and indiſpoſed. For how can it be otherwiſe accounted for, than, that thou art yet carnal, and retaineſt a greater regard for the opinion of men, than can be well conſiſtent with a perſon who hath renounced the world, and profeſſes to dedicate himſelf entirely to God? Whence is reproof ſo grating and uneaſy? Whence that ſollicitous care to contrive excuſes? Whence that forward zeal in thy own vindication, if not from a dread and abhorrence of that contempt, to which thy ſuppoſed miſcarriages would expoſe thee? Fondneſs of honour and reputation lies at the bottom, and inordinate deſire to recommend thyſelf to man's eſteem. Which ſhews thou art not yet ſo humble, ſo reſigned, but that a principle of vanity lurks ſtill within; nor is the world yet dead to thee, or thou to the world.

Attend diligently to my inſtructions, and the cenſures of ten thouſand men will not be able to diſturb thee. Let them proceed in their envy and malice, and blacken thy name after the moſt ſpiteful manner that hell itſelf can practiſe or invent, yet what art thou the worſe? Can all this change thy perſon? Or hath thy head one hair the leſs for it? Do but compoſe thy mind, and reſolve to deſpiſe it, and all blows over. Theſe ſcandals vaniſh and fly away, like motes in the ſun, and are neither more nor leſs, than what reſentment makes them. To be provoked with every ſlanderous word argues a meaneſs of ſoul, a want of due regard for God; but the brave generous mind, whoſe all is in God, and who refers himſelf entirely to his judgment, is above the terrors and diſcouragements of men, and lays no ſtreſs upon their notions of things. For their notions are frequently raſh and falſe; they ſeldom do, and ſometimes cannot, enter into the real merits of the cauſe; but to me all hearts are open, and from me no ſecrets are hid. I know diſtinctly, both in what manner, and with what intention, every thing is done. The perſon who receives, and does the wrong, are both under my cognizance; and even the wrong it ſelf is done by my permiſſion; that by this means the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. I ſhall not fail to make a juſt and clear deciſion between the guilty and the innocent; and call both to account hereafter; however I may think fit to try them in the mean while, and keep thoſe things in the dark at preſent, which then ſhall be notorious to all the world. And whatſoever may prevail now, my judgment will be according to equity and truth; and my ſentence, once pronounced, can never be revers'd. Few indeed are capable of diſcerning the juſtice of my providence, in ſuffering innocent men to be traduced, and their honeſt actions miſunderſtood. But I do nothing without wiſe reaſons, and neither am, nor can be, miſtaken in my methods, how much ſoever ſhort-ſighted and inconſiderate men are confounded about them.

Appeal then in all theſe caſes to my determination, and let thy matter reſt ſo fully there, as not only to diſregard what others think concerning thee, but even in ſome meaſure to diſtruſt thy own judgment concerning thy ſelf. Conſider, that I think many things fit for my ſervants, which they can by no means imagine convenient for themſelves. This very reflection preſerves a good man's temper, in every accident of life; becauſe he knows, that every accident falls out thus by my direction. This buoys his ſpirits up againſt the inſults and injuries of calumny and detraction; and keeps them from ſwelling into pride and immoderate joy, when his innocence is cleared, and his virtue commended. He knows that God ſees not as man ſees; for man judges according to outward and fallible appearances, but God ſearches the reins and the heart, and judges righteous judgment.

Diſciple.] O Lord, thou *righteous judge, ſtrong and patient*, who underſtandeſt the frailty and the wickedneſs of men, be thou my ſtrong rock, my truſt and defence, *Pſal.* vii. For even in my own conſcience I dare not be confident; ſince many things which to me are either unknown or forgotten thou haſt a perfect knowledge, and exact remembrance of. I ought therefore in all reproofs and reproaches to ſubmit with patience, even *though my heart condemn me not*; becauſe thou, who permitteſt theſe things, *art greater than my heart, and knoweſt all things*, John iii. Thus reaſon and religion both convince me, I ought to behave my ſelf; but, if at any time paſſion and frailty have exceeded in too nice and tender a ſenſe of theſe things, pardon, I beſeech thee, what is paſt, and enable me to be more reſigned for the time to come. Thy mercy alone will avail me more than all my laboured excuſes; and pardon is what I rather chuſe, than the moſt confident teſtimony of my own conſcience. For though *I ſhould know nothing by my ſelf, yet am I not hereby juſtified*; for *he that judgeth me is the Lord:* 1 Cor. iv. The Lord, who will one day *bring to light the hidden things of diſhoneſty*, even thoſe, which have eſcaped the committer's own obſervation. And therefore, *if thou, Lord, ſhould'ſt be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, no fleſh living could be juſtified in thy ſight*, Pſ. cxxx. 3. Pſ. cxliii. 2.

CHAP. LII.

Nothing too much to ſuffer for eternal life.

CHRIST.

LET not, my ſon, thy labours or ſufferings for me and thy duty, or any other ſort of hardſhip or tribulation in this world, ſo far daunt thy courage, but that my promiſe ſtill ſhould be a ſure anchor-hold of hope; and this reflection ever miniſters comfort, that I am able to recompence thee not only beyond what is reaſonable to expect, but even impoſſible for thee to wiſh or imagine. Thy toils will not continue very long, nor will thy pain and trouble always torment thee. Wait but a little longer, and look forward and ſee how glorious a proſpect opens it ſelf: how ſpeedily the end of all thy ſufferings approaches; and how ſuddenly ſorrow and tumult vaniſh away. Even time it ſelf is not of everlaſting continuance; but that which is bounded within ſo very narrow a ſpace, as this ſhort ſpan of life, cannot in any fair computation be counted long or great. Proceed then in thy duty with vigor and undaunted reſolution; ply thy work hard in my vineyard, and fill the ſtation I have appointed thee to; thy Wages are certain and valuable, for I my ſelf will *be thy exceeding great reward*, Gen. xvii.

Perſiſt in writing, in reading, in ſinging, meditation, in devout prayer, in fortitude and patience. For the things prepar'd for them that love God, are richly worth theſe and greater conflicts; all thou muſt do, all thou canſt ſuffer, are in no degree worthy to be compared with them. The day is coming, and fix'd in my unalterable decree, adorn'd with the triumphs of joy and peace; that mighty revolution, when theſe alternate ſucceſſions of day and night ſhall ceaſe; and everlaſting uninterrupted light ſhall ſhine for ever. There ſhall be luſtre infinite, ſatisfactions unbroken, unconceivable, reſt eternal, and above the power of any future danger. There ſhall then be no place left for that melancholy wiſh; *O that thou would'ſt deliver me from the body of this death!* Rom. vii. No occaſion for that complaint, *Wo is me, that I am conſtrained to dwell with Meſhech, and to have my habitation in this barren wilderneſs*, Pſal. cxx. For even *the laſt enemy* ſhall be ſubdued, *and death itſelf deſtroyed*, 1 Cor. xv. Salvation then and life ſhall reign for ever; ſorrow and anguiſh, ſighs and tears ſhall flee away; a crown of rejoycing put upon every head, and thou ſhalt be happy in the ſweet ſociety *of ſaints and angels, the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, and the aſſembly of the firſt-born*, Heb. xii.

Oh! could'ſt thou now but ſee the heavens open, and with the ſight of mortal eye behold the bright and everlaſting crowns of my choſen; were thy heart large enough to admit a juſt idea of their trophies and glories, whom once the world deſpiſed, and thought not worthy to live upon the earth; thou then would'ſt gladly embrace their ſufferings and reproaches, abandon all thy vain deſires of worldly grandeur, and diſdain the periſhing pleaſures of the preſent life. Humility and patience would then appear in all their native beauties; and even affliction and ignominy diſplay ſuch charms, as muſt attract thy love, and make thee eſteem the reproaches of Chriſt greater treaſures and gain, than all the majeſty and honour, and moſt celebrated reputation, that a mortal ſtate is capable of receiving. At-

Attend then ſeriouſly to theſe important truths. For they, if conſidered and believed in good earneſt, will ſtop thy mouth, and effectually ſilence all thy complaints. For ſure the ſufferings of a moment cannot be thought too dear a price for eternal happineſs in exchange. Surely the kingdom of God is no trifling concern. And when the loſing or attaining this lies before thee, nothing can be too much to prevent that loſs; nothing a hard bargain for that infinite advantage. Grovel then upon the earth no longer, but ſtand erect, and lift thy eyes and heart to heaven. See there the bleſſed effects, the mighty ſucceſs, of all thoſe ſharp conflicts, which my ſaints, while in the body, underwent; the end of all their tryals and adverſities, their painful ſeverities and pious labours. Theſe mortify'd afflicted men once reputed the *filth of the world, and the off-ſcouring of all things*, 1 Cor. iv. the common mark of inſolence and malice, are now in perfect joy; their ſorrows ſwallowed up in tranſporting bliſs and comfort; their dangers changed into ſecure peace; their labours into eaſe and ſweet repoſe; their perſecutions and unjuſt accuſations before the bar of men, into thrones of glory, where they ſit and judge the world, and live, and rejoice, and reign with me for ever.

CHAP. LIII.

The joys of eternity, and miſeries of this preſent life.

DISCIPLE.

O Bleſſed manſions of the heavenly city! O bright and glorious day of eternal happineſs! A day that never declines; a ſun that never ſets, nor is obſcured by any ſucceeding night; but a ſtate always

ways chearful, always fixed, and ſecured from change and ſorrow, from danger and decay. How do I pant and thirſt after that happy hour, when this bleſſed morning ſhall dawn and ſhed it's beams, and with a wondrous Luſtre put an end to all darkneſs and miſery of mortality? It already ſhines indeed in the hearts and hopes of theſe good men, whoſe converſation is even now in heaven: But then theirs is but a diſtant proſpect, and ſuch as, while they ſojourn here, preſents things only in a glaſs. The citizens and inhabitants of thoſe bleſſed regions ſee it with their naked eye; they feel and enjoy its ſweetneſs, and are all enlightned with its rays; while the diſtreſſed ſons of *Eve* endure and groan under their exile, and cannot but lament the bitterneſs of this imperfect gloomy day, which men on earth call evil. A day but ſhort, and, which is worſe, diſmal and uncomfortable. For, who can worthily expreſs the pains, the perplexities of body and ſoul, which are the neceſſary, the inſeparable incumbrances of man's preſent condition? A condition, wherein he is polluted with ſo many ſins, entangled with ſo many difficulties, beſet with ſo many misfortunes, oppreſs'd with ſo many fears, diſtracted with ſo many cares, diſturbed and diverted from his main concern by ſo many impertinences, deluded with ſo many vanities, confounded with ſo many errors, conſumed and worn out with ſo much labour and trouble; aſſaulted by temptations, and emaſculated by pleaſures, and tormented with great variety of neceſſities and want?

O! when will there be an end of this ſo complicated miſery? When may I hope to be enlarged and releaſed from this bondage of ſin? When ſhall my thoughts and deſires center, and be for ever fixed, in thee, my God, alone? when may I hope to attain true joy in thee, without any allay of bodily ſuffering, without any diſtraction of mind? when ſhall I reſt in firm untroubled peace? peace from accidents and temptations without, peace from guilt and miſguiding, from the ſollicitations of luſt, and the violence of paſſion within? when ſhall I ſee my Jeſus face to face, and contemplate the beauties of his kingdom and Glorious Godhead; when will my deareſt Saviour be my all in all, and receive me to thoſe delightful habitations prepared for them that love him, and that are loved by him, before the foundation of the world.

behold! I am here deſolate and poor, a ſtranger and alone in an enemy's country; where wars rage and never ceaſe, and terrible diſtreſſes come thick and ſtrong upon me every day and hour. Be thou my comfort in this exiled and deſolate condition. Aſſwage my pain, and incline thy favour to thy ſervant, whoſe parched and languiſhing ſoul *gapeth unto thee as a thirſty land. Pſal.* cxliii. Thou only art able to do this; for what a miſtaken world calls comforts, are but ſo many freſh additions to my burden. I long moſt earneſtly to enjoy, but cannot yet attain my wiſh. Gladly would I graſp and cling to heavenly things, but am detained and faſtened down to earth, by vanities below, and unmortify'd affections, my mind labours to get above theſe; but even, when the ſpirit is willing I find the fleſh extreamly weak, and my ſenſual, prevails over my better and heavenly inclinations.

Thus am I, wretched man, involved in a perpetual war, and live in contradiction to my ſelf; my own hindrance and torment, moving different ways, and purſuing differents ends and proſpects, at one and the ſame time. How great is my concern and conflict, when I ſet my mind to meditate and pray, and, in the midſt of this exerciſe, am interrupted by a multitude of wordly and carnal imaginations crowding in upon me? *Go not far from me, O my God, neither caſt away thy ſervant in diſpleaſure.* Scatter theſe dark and gloomy clouds, which intercept my viſion of thee, by the brightneſs of thy lightning; of thunder upon them from heaven. *Caſt out thine arrows and dicomfit them, Pſal.* cxliv. Recollect my broken and ſcattered thoughts, help me to forget the things of this world, to reject and deſpiſe, and effectually expel all ſinful imaginations. Aſſiſt me, thou ſubſtantial truth, and root me faſt, that no blaſt of vanity may ſhake and unſettle my heart. Diffuſe thy heavenly ſweetneſs through my ſoul, and chaſe away all nauſeous, alluring and impure affections, for theſe cannot ſtand before thee.

Particularly, deareſt Lord, I implore thy Compaſſion upon my infirmities; and in thy mercy impute not to me my many wandring thoughts in prayer. For there, I muſt confeſs, my diſtractions are great and frequent; and I am often leaſt of all in that place, where I ſtand or kneel: Thus, while my body is before thy footſtool, my mind is carried away I know not whither. And this is a melancholy reflection, ſuch as gives me occaſion to ſuſpect, and deeply bewail my ſelf. Since where my thoughts are, there properly and indeed am I; and where my thoughts frequent, and delight to dwell, there without doubt is the object of my affection and concern; and that, which either natural diſpoſition or long cuſtom renders moſt delightful, that to be ſure is moſt familiar, and comes continually uppermoſt. All this I gather from that obſervation, which thou, eternal truth, haſt left us, that *where our treaſure is there will our heart be alſo. Matth.* vi.

This then is the rule, by which I try and ſound the bent of my heart; if I love heaven, the thoughts of it will be frequent and pleaſant to me. But if I love the world, the effect of this will be, that I ſhall feel exceſs of joy in proſperous events, and be as immoderate in my grief for thoſe that are otherwiſe. If I love the fleſh, wanton and carnal imaginations will often return upon me, and be entertained with ſatiſfaction; but if I love the ſpirit, I ſhall find in ſpiritual objects a grateful reliſh, and dwell upon, them with true delight. For this my own ſenſes and experience aſſure me, that what I love moſt I am beſt pleaſed to be entertained with, eagereſt to hear, and forwardeſt to talk of, moſt careful to remember, and to preſerve deep and laſting impreſſions of, upon my mind. And therefore though I cannot attain to it ſo fully as I wiſh and ſtrive, yet I can plainly perceive, and do truly value and admire, the happineſs of them, who can abandon all, and ſtick to thee alone; that commit a holy violence upon their natural inclinations, crucify the fleſh, and with a pure bright zeal, and a clear conſcience, can offer holy and fervent prayers, a ſpiritual and unblemiſh'd ſacrifice, where all without are forbidden entrance, and all within is compoſed. Theſe men, ſo firmly intent upon thee and their devotions, are qualified to praiſe thee with thoſe angels, whoſe refined excelleneies they ſo happily aſpire after, and to whoſe bleſſed ſociety thou wilt one day exalt and admit them.

CHAP. LIV.

Of the deſire of eternal life, and the happineſs of them who ſtrive manfully.

CHRIST.

MY ſon, when thou feeleſt thy ſoul inflamed with an eager deſire of eternal happineſs, and thinkeſt long to be releaſed from this priſon of the body, that thou may'ſt be bleſſed with a nearer and more diſtinct view, a perfect, full and uninterrupted fruition, of my brightneſs and majeſty; ſet open all the avenues of thy ſoul, and gladly receive the holy inſpiration. Expreſs thy humbleſt thanks to God, and be duly ſenſible of his goodneſs, who deals ſo bountifully with thee, viſits thee with his mercy, ſupports and ſtrengthens thee with his grace, and raiſes thoſe affections up to heaven, which have a fatal innate tendency to immerſe thy ſoul in earth, and fleſh, and ſenſe. For, do not miſtake the matter, no reaſonings or endeavours of thy own have power to effect ſo good a work, or to create thoſe ſpiritual inclinations; the operation of God is in them, and they are owing to no leſs noble a cauſe, than the free and bountiful donation of divine grace and favour; the deſign of which is to advance and exalt thy virtues; to make thee humble and modeſt, with reflections upon the ſtrength of another made perfect in thy weakneſs; to fit thee for future tryals, and ſorer conflicts; to engage thy affections, and encourage thy preſerverance, in the faithful ſervice of ſo gracious, ſo good a maſter.

Nor let thy ſpirits be dejected, ſon, if this be not done with all that zeal, and intire reſignation of a heart perfectly undivided, which thou could'ſt wiſh. For, as in common fire there will always be ſome ſmoke; ſo in thoſe holy flames many Men are ſincerely deſirous of heavenly things, who yet cannot quite diveſt themſelves of carnal affections, nor be abſolutely free from all temptations. And therefore ſome other Proſpects will often interpoſe, as well as that of promoting God's glory only by thoſe good actions, for which the aſſiſtances of his grace are ſought, and earneſtly implored; of this thy own Experience convinces thee by ſundry Inſtances, in which thou ſeeſt no Reaſon to ſuſpect thy own Integrity. Nor will all that be condemned at the laſt day, which was attempted with a mixture of ſome deſire to promote thy own temporal advantage. Only take care that this deſire prevail not ſo far, as to incline thee to prefer what may contribute to thy profit or delight, before thoſe things which will procure my Favour. With a conſiderate chriſtian my deſire will take place above his own will; and if it reign not in his heart alone, yet it always ſits Supreme, and overrules the reſt. *I know all thy deſires, and thy groanings are not hid from me. Pſal* xxxviii. Thou would'ſt this Inſtant be admitted into the glorious liberty of God's ſons: the bliſsful and eternal manſions of thy heavenly father's houſe are thy longings and delight; and *as the hart panteth after the water ſprings, ſo doth thy ſoul pant and thirſt after me. Pſal.* xlii. But as yet thou art not ripe for theſe joys; that happy hour is not come; for this life is the time of warfare, and action, and Trial, and not of reſt, and joy, and triumph; and thou muſt be content to wait with patience, till the kingdom of God ſhall come in perfection.

The condition of mortals upon earth, is that exerciſe and diſcipline; the joys they feel are comforts and ſupports, not full and perfect happineſs; they are given not to ſatisfy, but only to ſuſtain them. And therefore receive them as they are, and uſe them to their proper purpoſe; that by them thy conſtancy and patience may be preſerv'd from ſinking under the weight of any difficulties, which either the doing or ſuffering things, to which frail and corrupt nature is averſe, may at any time expoſe thee. For the change of a man's ſelf is a very laborious undertaking, and yet this muſt be done. The fleſh with its luſts muſt be crucified, a new heart and a new Spirit introduced, many things done, which offer violence to a man's inclinations, many forſaken and let alone, to which he is ſtrongly diſpoſed. Others thou ſhalt often obſerve crown'd with ſucceſs, when thy own no leſs painful endeavours are defeated and diſappointed: Others look'd upon as oracles, when thy better and wiſer advice is diſregarded and deſpiſed! Others will ſuffer long, and at laſt obtain their deſire; thou, perhaps, tho' equally fervent and zealous in thy application, diſmiſt with a repulſe; others be great in fame or general eſteem, while thy more deſerving virtues are paſs'd over in ſilence; others careſſed, preferr'd, truſted in matters of conſequence, and looked upon as uſeful and neceſſary, while thou art reputed a uſeleſs and inſignificant perſon. Theſe miſtaken or partial judgments of men will grate hard upon human nature; but even theſe will turn to good account, if ſuſtained with meekneſs, and modeſty, and Silence. For theſe are the very methods by which God brings the fidelity of his ſervants to the touch; 'tis thus that he diſcovers, whether they have gained a conqueſt over nature and themſelves. And no ſort of mortification is of happier conſequence, than that which expoſes men to the ſight and ſuffering of things, to which their own inclinations are moſt violently averſe. Eſpecially, when what they cannot but conceive moſt unfit, moſt abſurd and unaccountable conſtrains them to go againſt their own ſence, and ſubmit to a higher power, without any reſerve to the private judgment of their own reaſon in the caſe. This is indeed difficult and a perfection of ſubmiſſion not eaſy to be compaſs'd; but did men well conſider, how great the advantages of a temper ſo reſigned are at preſent, how glorious the reward of it hereafter, and how quickly the troubles it expoſes them to will end in that reward; the comforts of ſuch diſcipline would be ſenſible and great, and they would even enjoy their afflictions and temptations, ſuſtained with ſo pure, ſo bright a proſpect, of the ineſtimable and approaching recompence.

For this ſhort empty pleaſure, which now thou chuſeſt for my ſake to decline, ſhall be compenſated with ſolid and everlaſting joy in heaven: and there thy largeſt wiſhes ſhall be gratified. There ſhall be plenty of every thing that is good. Fruition perfect and ſecure, free from the leaſt allay of fear, or poſſibility of future loſſes. Between thy will and mine ſhall then be perfect harmony; no oppoſition there, no obſtruction; but every thing ſhall conſpire to fulfil all thy heart's deſire, and render thy happineſs as exquiſite, as finite nature is capable of. Thy preſent ignominy, born with patience, ſhall there be paid with brighter glory; thy mourning weeds exchanged for robes of light and joy; and he who ſits here in the loweſt place, ſhall there be ſeated on an eternal throne. Let it not then be grievous to thee, to humble and ſubmit thy ſelf to the capricious humours of men, with whom thou converſeſt in this world; but rather ſo compoſe thy mind, and order all thy actions, as readily and meekly to comply with the commands of thy ſuperiours, the deſires of thy equals, the requeſts of thy inferiours, to do for all what lawfully thou mayeſt, and to endure patiently whatever they ſhall, but ought not, to do to thee. Let vain men purſue vanity, leave them to their own methods. Let them place their glory and happineſs in ſuch objects, as their own miſtaken judgments ſhall determine them to. Let them admire, and above all things covet a celebrated name, and popular applauſe: but do thou place thy excellence and honour in the contempt of thy ſelf, thy diligence in diſcharging my commands, thy zeal in ſeeking and advancing my honour and kingdom; and let this be firſt and chief in thy deſires, that *whether thou live, thou may'ſt live unto the Lord; or whether thou die, thou mayeſt die unto the Lord; ſo that whether by life or death, the Lord Jeſus may be magnified in thy body*. Rom. xiv. Pſal. i. 20.

CHAP. LV.

An act of reſignation to God in time of adverſity.

DISCIPLE.

BLeſſed be that wiſdom and goodneſs, O holy father, which performs all thy will; for what thy will decrees, cannot be otherwiſe than good and wiſe. Give me grace, I beſeech thee, to rejoice, not in my ſelf, or any other, but in thee alone; for thou art my only hope and crown, my joy and glory.

ry. All I have is received at thy bountiful hand; bountiful to a moſt unworthy creature, who neither could procure, nor deſerve the leaſt of all thy mercies: and thou, by giving and compleating, haſt not loſt thy property and right in all, which by thy means I enjoy or do. For what am I, alas! but a weak helpleſs wretch? acquainted with miſery from my cradle, and conſumed with trouble and vexation; my face is grown old with tears, and my heart perplexed and broken with doubts, and ſorrows and vehement paſſions. I beg and long moſt earneſtly for the bleſſing of peace, that peace and inward conſolation, which thy children feed and feaſt upon. If thou ſhalt fill my ſoul with this, it will overflow with joy and praiſe, and continually breath out holy hymns to the honour of thy name. But if thou turn away thy face, as ſometimes thou ſeeſt fit to do, I find my ſelf unable to run in the way of thy commandments; and, proſtrating my ſelf in the anguiſh of my ſoul, I beat my breaſt, and wring my hands, for the loſs of that light and comfort, that ſtrength and protection, which I enjoyed, while under the ſhadow of thy wings, and defended from the aſſaults of ſorrow and adverſity.

Righteous father, (then ſay I) the time is come when thou art pleaſed to try me, but even at this time, and at all others, praiſed be thy name. Deareſt father, it is very meet, that now thou call'ſt me to it, I ſhould ſuffer in obedience to thy will. Moſt honoured father, this is thy hour, even that important hour, which thou from all eternity haſt ordained, to be the ſeaſon of my outward oppreſſion and diſcomfort becoming the inſtrument of endleſs life and joy to me: but tho' this heavineſs may endure for a night, yet light and glory will return in the morning. This, holy father, is thy own appointment, and what thou willeſt thou never willeſt in vain. For even this ſuffering in the preſent life is a mark of thy favour and friendſhip; the returns, the inſtruments, the manner, the continuance of my afflictions, are all of thy permitting; for nothing is or can be done, without thy providence and direction, without ſome wiſe and excellent deſign. Even I my ſelf am ſenſible, *how good is it for me to have been afflicted, that I might learn thy ſtatutes*, Pſal. cxix. and utterly reject all pride and carnal confidences. The ſhame and ſelf reproach I laboured under, hath taught me to expect relief from God, and not from man. And all my afflictions put me upon contemplating the unſearchable depths of thy providence, which, with a wonderful temper of juſtice and equity, layeth theſe burdens upon bad and good, without any peculiar or diſcriminating marks of love or hatred in this preſent world.

I will therefore render the moſt unfeigned thankſgiving to my God, for that in marvellous kindneſs he hath not ſpared the rod, when it was convenient for me: I acknowledge his mercy, even in the pains and croſſes, and ſorrows I have endured, whether of mind, or body, or eſtate; and yet much more, for thoſe refreſhments and remedies, which thou alone haſt afforded me. For vain is all the help of man; but thou art the true, the powerful phyſician of ſouls, thou *woundeſt and healeſt*; *thou bringeſt down to the gates of hell, and raiſeſt up again*, Deut. xxxii. Thy chaſtiſement ſhall teach me wiſdom; thou ſhalt beat me with the rod, and I ſhall not die. Behold me, Lord, moſt willingly ſubmitting to thy diſcipline;

O ſtrike, and ſpare not, ſo thou bend my ſtubborn heart, and bring down my high ſpirit, and make me tractable and obedient to thee. I, Lord, and mine are at thy diſpoſal, put forth thy hand and touch them as thou pleaſeſt. For this I know, that how grievous ſoever theſe temporal croſſes may be, yet better is it to feel the weight of thy hand here, than hereafter. All things are naked and open to thee, even the inmoſt receſſes of our hearts; thou knoweſt the things that will be before they are; and needeſt not that any ſhould inform thee what is done upon earth. Thou ſeeſt what will contribute moſt to my improvement in goodneſs; how great and good effect diſtreſſes have, to ſcour the ruſt from our unactive minds, and brighten all our virtues. Take then, my God, thy own meaſures; I only beg, that thou woud'ſt not diſdain, and give me over, and think me unworthy of thy care, for thoſe blemiſhes and miſdemeanors of my life, which none are better acquainted with, which none indeed are thoroughly acquainted with, but thou the ſearcher of hearts alone.

Work in me, I intreat thee, a true amendment; inſtruct me in all things fit for me to know; diſpoſe me to love all things worthy my affection; to think, that every thing deſerves my praiſe, in proportion as it pleaſes thee; to eſteem nothing highly, but what is precious and honourable in thy ſight; to look with a generous diſdain upon all that thou thinkeſt vile, and never be reconciled to what thou hateſt. Let me not, I beſeech thee, judge by outward appearances, the ſeeing of the eye, or the hearing of the ear, which are ſubject to infinite deluſions and miſtakes. But give me a right judgment in all things, whether they relate to this or another ſtate, to the outward, or the inner man: and, above all, let it be my particular care to inform my ſelf in thy will concerning me. Men, who form their judgment upon ſenſe, often err; men, who ſet their affections upon the ſenſible objects of this world, are frequently diſappointed and miſerable: for, is a man, for inſtance, one whit the better, becauſe he is grown greater in other men's eſteem? Is common opinion the ſtandard of merit? Nothing leſs. Here every man abuſes his fellow: the cheat impoſes upon another as great a cheat; the vain puffs up the vain; the blind miſleads the blind; the weak ſupports the weak; and all the while, by empty undeſerved commendations, each brings a true reproach upon the other, while he extols him againſt ſenſe and reaſon. For after all, theſe praiſes are but words without any ſignificance; nothing more than air and empty ſound; for every man is juſt as good, and neither more nor leſs, than he is in thy eſteem only.

CHAP. LVI.

A man muſt be content with meaner acts of virtue, when he is not diſpoſed for greater.

CHRIST.

DO not ſuppoſe, my ſon, that thy zeal can always be equally bright, or thy mind capable of tranſport and intent contemplation upon heavenly objects at all times. Thou carrieſt about with thee a load of infirmity and corruption, which will often damp the cleareſt flames of devotion, darken thy mind, and check its noble flights; and make thee know and feel, that mortal fleſh and blood is a heavy, but inſeperable, incumbrance upon a rational and religious ſoul. While men are in the body, there is no remedy, but they muſt feel and groan under the weight. And groan they ought indeed, when they conſider, how great an interruption this is to their attendance upon, and entire dedication of their time and thoughts, to God and heavenly objects. Theſe they muſt be content to dwell upon as much as may be, by uſing to good purpoſe all thoſe happy intervals, which leiſure and a good temper of mind allow them.

But when the ſoul is indiſpoſed for nobler exerciſes, when cares or infirmities preſs it down, let it not be unactive. Variety is here of uſe; and works of a meaner rank in the ſcale of virtue muſt be recurred to; that thou may'ſt be ſtill employ'd, ſtill waiting for the happy hour, when I ſhall return and viſit thee with larger meaſures of my Grace. Bear with meekneſs the preſent diſcomfort and incapacity, the dry and barren ſtate of thy ſoul, till I ſend my refreſhing dews, and infuſe a principle of fruitfulneſs, for a product in greater plenty and perfection. For I can ſoon make thee to forget thy paſt troubles, and ſatisfy thy mind with the abundance of peace. I open for thee the ſpacious plains of ſcripture, that thou may'ſt be enlarged, and run the way of my commandments in liberty; and, with a ſoul full of joy and inward exultation, ſay, *I reckon that the ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us*, Rom. viii.

CHAP. LVII.

A man ſhould think correction, not comfort, his due.

Disciple.

LOrd, I muſt needs with ſhame confeſs my ſelf altogether unworthy thy comforts, or any part of that care thou art pleaſed to take of my ſoul; and therefore I have no pretence to complain of hard uſage, or injuſtice, when thou withdraweſt thy grace, and leaveſt me to my ſelf. Whole ſeas of tears could not ſo cleanſe my polluted ſoul, as to render it pure enough to merit the bleſſed influences of thy ſpirit. Scourges and vengeance are the portion of a wretch, who by ſo many and ſo grievous tranſgreſſions hath offended thy majeſty. The more therefore I reflect upon my own ſinfulneſs, the clearer and juſter notions I have of thy free undeſerved mercy. For merciful thou art, even to aſtoniſhment, whoſe bowels thus yearn over the work of thy own hands; who thus to all the world hath manifeſted the riches of thy grace in the veſſels of mercy, and extendeſt thy liberality to thoſe who have no right to challenge, no recommendation to induce thee to it.

But, if we could pretend to comforts, yet how could we expect ſuch divine, ſuch incomparably ſweet and noble marks of thy favour? So very unlike, ſo much above any human helps or encouragements? For how could I expect the bread of life from heaven? Good works I know of none I have to plead; but the ſlighteſt recollection even amazes and confounds me with ſins innumerable brought to my remembrance. My vehement proneneſs to evil, and ſhameful ſloth and backwardneſs to reformation and goodneſs, are of themſelves ſo evident, that ſhould I labour to cloak them, the atrempt muſt needs be vain; for thou, the ſearcher of hearts, art privy to them; thou canſt diſprove me, and no advocate is to be found, who could offer any thing in my vindication. What then can I juſtly lay claim to, but hell and everlaſting flames? I own with grief and ſhame, that reproach and contempt are my due; and that I am unworthy to be named among thy ſons, or even thy meaneſt ſervants. Nature indeed ſtarts back, and cannot without reluctancy acknowledge its own vileneſs and guilt; but I will offer violence to my native pride, and freely confeſs my ſins, that thou may'ſt ſhew thy juſtice and faithfulneſs, in a full and free pardon of the faults I do voluntarily confeſs.

But where ſhall I find words fit for ſo miſerable a condition, or how ſhall ſo ſcandalous a creature apply to thee for pardon? I know no other terms than theſe, that become my mouth. 'Lord, I have ſinned, I have done wickedly. Mercy thou judge of quick and dead, mercy, or I periſh. Reſpite thy Sentence yet a little while, and grant me ſome time at leaſt to bewail my miſery, before I be ſwallowed up in darkneſs, and go into a land, black with the terrors of the Shadow of death. *Job*. x. What reparation can be had, from men laden with guilt and infirmity, than that they ſhould ſeriouſly bewail, and humble themſelves for their mighty and manifold provocations? Hence all our hopes of remiſſion ſpring, here the firſt ſeeds of a reconciliation take root; they joy of a peaceful conſcience is ſown in tears; the acknowledgment of our weakneſs is the firſt ſtep towards repairing our loſs, the firſt defence againſt the wrath to come; and in theſe melancholy ſolitudes the gracious God and penitent ſoul meet and embrace each other. A broken and a contrite heart is reputed a *ſacrifice*; *Pſal.* li. Thou, in wonderful condeſcenſion preferreſt it before the odours, the ſweeteſt Incenſe, or whole hecatombs of burnt-offerings. Of this that precious ointment, whoſe perfumes, when it anointed thy holy feet, filled the whole houſe, was an emblem; for thou, Lord, never didſt or wilt, deſpiſe a ſoul afflicted with a ſenſe of ſin. Contrition and humility are our ſanctuary againſt the rage and malice of our ſpiritual adverſary; and tears of penitence are that purifying ſtream, which waſhes off the ſtains and blemiſhes of our polluted ſouls.'

CHAP. LVIII.

The grace of God dwells not with worldly-minded men.

CHRIST.

THE tokens of my love are of a nobler kind, than that they ſhould ſubmit to be rivall'd by the Bleſſings of this would; for heavenly comforts diſdain to mix with thoſe of earth. If then, my ſon, thou deſired to be filled full of my benediction and grace, all that obſtruct its free poſſeſſion of thy heart muſt be affectually rejected. Covet retirement, and prefer private converſation with God, before all the diverſions of human ſociety. Eſteem no company ſo delightful as thy cloſet and thy devotions; and there, by fervent prayers, pour out thy ſoul to God, that thy Zeal may be quickned, and thy peace of conſcience ſecured. Let the whole world be mean in thy eſteem, and account it a greater honour to be called and choſen of God, than any advantages fortune or advancement can confer. For, be aſſured, thy ſoul cannot admit of two ſuch different affections, to the love of me, and tranſitory pleaſures. The moſt intimate acquaintance and deareſt friends muſt not ſtand in competition with me; but they who will be mine in good earneſt, muſt follow the apoſtle's advice, and behave *themſelves as Strangers and pilgrims in a world which muſt ſhortly be diſſolved.* 2 *Pet.* iii. And when the time of this, or their own, diſſolution approaches; the joy and holy truſt of that mind, which ſits looſe to all here below, is more bleſſed, than words can utter.

But to live thus abſtracted and diſengaged from the world, is a perfection not attainable by every common man; nor can the ſenſual perſon taſte the delights, or enjoy the liberty of a true ſpiritual ſtate. For this requires a diſtance to be kept from all external objects, that thoſe things human nature loves moſt tenderly ſhould be renounced; nay, even that himſelf ſhould be ſo; for each man is his own worſt enemy, and the moſt threatning dangers riſe from within. He that hath gained an entire conqueſt over himſelf, will find it no great difficulty to ſubdue all other oppoſition; and this is a compleat victory indeed. And when the ſenſual appetite ſubmits readily to my will, this man is maſter of himſelf and all the world. But they, who would aſpire to this perfection, muſt ſet out with reſolution, and early lay the ax to the root of the tree; that no darling ſin, no corrupt or inordinate affection, may be left ſtanding. For all that bitterneſs and Sin, which is neceſſary to be hewn down, in order to an entire reformation and heavenly purity of heart and life, are but ſo many branches of that corrupt ſtock, the irregular love of a mans own ſelf. And when that ſtock is killed and cut down, profound peace, and uninterrupted happineſs, are the conſequents of ſuch Mortification.

The only reaſon why ſo many continue ſtill entangled in ſenſual affections, and find themſelves unable to ſoar above themſelves and the incumbrances here below, is that very few have attained to the ſkill of dying to their own inclinations, and diveſting themſelves of narrow and ſelfiſh deſigns. For he who affects to converſe freely with God, muſt firſt abandon all carnal and immoderate deſires, and get looſe from thoſe intanglements, which clog and rivet down the ſoul to earth. They who will retain a fondneſs of any created being, by minding temporal things, ſhew, that they are content to ſet up their reſt, ſhort of heaven and God himſelf. *Set* therefore *thy affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; for no man is ſufficient for the ſervice of two maſters; nor canſt thou love me and mammon both*, Coloſ. iii. 2. Mat. vi. 24.

CHAP. LIX.

The different motions of nature and grace.

CHRIST.

BE careful, my ſon, to diſtinguiſh between nature and grace, and exactly to obſerve their different tendencies and proſpects. For theſe are ſo very diſtant, ſo contrary to each other, and yet withal ſo intricate, that they require a ſpiritual and enlightened underſtanding, truly to diſcern them. In the general deſire of good all mankind agree. This is the ſpur and ſpring of every word and action; but that which produces ſo very different effects from the ſame original cauſe, is that men often miſtake ſhadows for ſubſtance, and are impoſed upon by falſe appearances of good.

Nature acts craftily, allures, enſnares, cheats thoſe that attend to her ſtratagems, and propoſes the gratifying her ſelf, for the end of all ſhe does. Grace deals candidly and ſincerely, complies with no evil, puts no cheat upon men, does all with regard to God, and reſts, in him, as its ſupreme and only end. Nature declines death and ſufferings, hates trouble and ſorrow, ſubjection and obedience: grace is exerciſed in perpetual mortification and ſelf-denial; chuſes to be over-ruled, to ſubmit; nay, reſtrains even lawful and innocent liberties; does not affect dominion and ſuperiority, but chuſes to live in a ſtate of humility and ſubjection; and eſteems no hardſhip, no compliance, uneaſy, for the ſake of God and a good conſcience. Nature is ſelfiſh, and always computes what profit every action may bring to the perſon that does it; grace overlooks all private gain, and labours chiefly to promote the publick good. Nature delights in honours and preferments, in a celebrated name, and the commendation of men; grace aſcribes all the honour and praiſe to God, and thinks, that things done well, are well rewarded by his acceptance and approbation. Nature dreads ignominy and contempt; but grace accounts it matter of great joy to be expoſed and vilified in a good cauſe. Nature is pleaſed with eaſe and indulgence, and bodily reſt: Grace is ever active, and undertakes buſineſs and toil with chearfulneſs. Nature is charmed with beauty and curioſity, and diſdains things that are mean, and vulgar and common: Grace is delighted with ſuch as are plain and

low

low in the eſteem of the world, diſdains not thoſe that are unpalatable, nor thinks her ſelf the worſe for the want of outward gaieties and ornaments. Nature aims at tranſitory enjoyments, is fond of wealth and increaſe, tenderly affected with loſſes and diſappointments, and provoked to the laſt degree with inſolence and reproach: Grace keeps eternal advantages in view, neglects the fading and periſhing, bears loſſes with evenneſs of temper, endures contempt and ſcandal patiently. For theſe, ſhe conſiders, are things of no momentous concern, to one whoſe heart and treaſure are in heaven; a place, where they are ſafe, and no misfortune can reach them. Nature is niggardly and cloſe-handed, and chuſes rather to receive than give; grace bountiful and kind; deſpiſing ſordid gain and parſimony, content with a little, diſtributes liberally and chearfully, and eſteems *it more bleſſed to give than to receive*, Acts xx.

Nature inclines to creature-comforts, to fleſhly delights, to worldly vanities and pomps, to wandring and unprofitable diverſions; Grace fixes the heart upon God and goodneſs, concerns it ſelf with the world as little as may be, hates fleſhly luſts; checks and confines roving imaginations, and affects privacy and ſolitude. Nature is much delighted with ſenſual pleaſures: Grace feels no pleaſure, but in God alone; and prefers that before all the delights that the objects of ſenſe can adminiſter. Nature does nothing without ſome proſpect of intereſt, and for every kindneſs expects as good or better returns, either of things in kind, or at leaſt of favour and applauſe for its pretended generoſity, and ſets a very high value upon all the obligations it lays; grace deſires no recompence in this world, but looks upon God as her reward; nor are the ſupplies and conveniences of life any farther of conſideration with her, than as a comfortable ſubſiſtance in this world may be ſerviceable, in promoting and facilitating the endeavours after another.

Nature values herſelf upon a diffuſive intereſt, and multitude of relations and friends, quality and noble blood; and therefore fawns upon, or favours men in power, courts and careſſes the rich, commends, and is partial to, perſons of the ſame condition, or opinion, or party: Grace is charitable and kind, even to enemies; is not exalted by great or numerous friendſhips; and thinks the deſcent and family of a man a very deſpicable thing, unleſs his virtue be as much more eminent than thoſe of his inferiors, as his birth and rank is above theirs. Grace favours the poor rather than the rich, and is more concerned for the hard fortune of an innocent perſon, than of a great one; pays its reſpects to true intrinſick worth, not to the meer ſigns and trappings of it, which often only ſhew where it ought to be, not where it really is; encourages the good in virtue, inſtead of flattering and ſoothing up the mighty in their wickedneſs and folly; and labours indefatigably, to conform thoſe who confeſs themſelves God's children, to the likeneſs of their heavenly father's excellencies, by promoting all manner of piety and goodneſs.

Nature is eaſily provoked to diſcontent, by indigent circumſtances: Grace bears want and poverty with meekneſs and unwearied patience. Nature's ends and deſigns conſtantly centre in her ſelf; but grace conſiders her original, and thinks, that all ſhould return thither from whence at firſt it came; arrogates nothing to it ſelf; is not aſſuming, does not contend for praiſe or preference; is not dogmatical and peremptory in her own opinions, but, in all ſearches after truth, ſubmits her own reaſon and judgment, to the incomprehenſible wiſdom of God. Nature affects to be knowing, to penetrate the profoundeſt and darkeſt myſteries, makes oſtentation of all her new diſcoveries, and pretends to experiment and demonſtration; and endeavours to diſtinguiſh her ſelf, to be thought wiſer than the reſt of the world, and would be extolled and admired for all that is ſpoken or written, or done: Grace thinks it not adviſeable, to lay out time or thought upon new or unprofitable curioſities; but conſiders, that the ruin of mankind is owing to that buſy deſire of knowing what God thought fit to conceal from them; that this inquiſitive pretending temper is a ſprout from that old root of bitterneſs; that eſtabliſhed truths may be depended upon, but new and fanciful notions are almoſt no ſooner entertained, than they are diſproved and exploded again; that men ſhould therefore check that vain pleaſure, which tickles their itching minds upon theſe occaſions; abandon vain-glory, labour rather to conceal, than to publiſh their advantages; and make uſefulneſs, and virtue, and God's honour the only end of all their knowledge and ſtudies. For to him alone all thanks and praiſe muſt of neceſſity be due, who gives men all they have, of his own mere motion and free mercy.

And ſuch is grace; a light ſuperior to nature, which ſhould direct and preſide over it; the peculiar gift of God; the diſtinguiſhing character of his choſen; the ſure pledge of everlaſting ſalvation;

for it raiſes a man's affections from earth to heaven, and changes him from fleſh to ſpirit. And, becauſe theſe two principles are acted by ſuch different motives, proceed in ſuch different methods, and purſue ſuch differing ends; therefore, in proportion as nature is weakned and ſubdued; the larger meaſures of grace are imparted, the more mens virtues are improved, and the glorious image of God renew'd in their hearts, by holy and heavenly diſpoſitions.

CHAP. LX.

The weakneſs of corrupt nature, and efficacy of divine grace.

DISCIPLE.

THou haſt indeed, my God, created me in thy own image, after thy likeneſs, and commanded *me to be holy, as thou thy ſelf art holy*, Gen. i. 14. 1 Pet. i. O grant me, I beſeech thee, that favour and aſſiſtance, which, thy own word hath taught me, is ſo important, ſo abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation; that I may ſubdue my own nature, whoſe inclinations are now ſo degenerate, ſo corrupt, that they have a ſtrong and conſtant tendency to ſin and death. For I feel and lament a *law of ſin in my body, warring continually againſt the law of my mind*, Rom. vii. drawing me to compliance with the fleſhly and ſenſual appetite, and diſabling me from any reſolute reſiſtance againſt its deſtructive motions; except thy divine grace pour in freſh ſuccours, and help me to ſtand in the day of battle. Lord, I have need, not only of thy grace, but of very plentiful and powerful communications of it, to turn the bias of nature, which from my very infancy, preponderates to evil. For this infection is derived from the firſt parent of mankind, and is the puniſhment of his offence diffuſed upon his whole poſterity; ſo that human nature, which came pure and good out of thy creating hand, is tainted and perverted, and all the motions, now remaining, attract the wrong way, and incline to ſin and earth.

The little power left in us to do good, is like a very ſmall ſpark, covered with a great heap of embers; the light of reaſon clouded with a thick noiſome miſt of darkneſs and error. And, though by this all the diſtinctions of good and evil, of truth and falſhood are not utterly loſt, yet the power of performing what our better reaſon approves, is gone; the light of truth is dim and feeble, and the integrity of our minds and affections is tainted, and diverted from attending to it impartially. Hence it comes to paſs, that, though ſometimes I am delighted with thy law in the inner man; and fully convinced, that *the commandment is holy, juſt, and good*, condemning wickedneſs, and warning me of the rocks and precipices, which, in ſteering my courſe through the waves of this troubleſome world, I muſt be watchful to avoid; yet ſtill with *the fleſh I ſerve the law of ſin*, Rom. vii. and find a greater diſpoſition to follow luſt and ſenſe, than to be governed by reaſon and religion. Hence I do often feel the *will to do well*; but *how to perform what I thus will, I find not.* Hence I often make and repeat good reſolutions with great ſincerity; but, for want of thy aſſiſtance to counterpoiſe my infirmities, quickly fall from my ſtedfaſtneſs, and am beaten off with the very approach of difficulty and oppoſition. Hence I diſcern the way I ſhould walk in; but when I am inform'd of my duty, and endeavour to raiſe my ſelf above the world and its temptations; a deſtructive innate weight draws me down again, and checks my ſoul in its intended flights to heaven and thee.

How abſolutely needful then, my God, is thy grace to help me in beginning, in carrying on, and accompliſhing every good work; ſince without it I can do nothing, and yet with it can do even all things? Yet not I, Lord, but thou, who art in me, and ſtrengtheneſt me. O gift truly divine! without which no deſert of man, no endowments or qualifications of nature, are of any worth or ſignificance at all! Sciences and arts, riches and power, beauty and ſtrength, wit and eloquence, what are they, Lord, or what to be counted of, if not ſeconded, aſſiſted, exalted and perfected by grace? Theſe are accompliſhments diſtributed promiſcuouſly to good and bad; but grace is a gift peculiar to thy children and choſen, and ſuch as renders the bleſſed men that have it worthy of eternal life and happineſs. A gift ſo ſingularly excellent, that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the power of working miracles, nor the underſtanding of ſublimeſt and moſt abſtruſe myſteries, nor faith, nor hope, nor any other virtue or privilege, can recommend us to God without it.

O bleſſed efficacy of grace, which makes the poor in ſpirit, rich in virtue and good works; and that man ſo enriched, humble and poor in ſpirit! Come heavenly gift, deſcend from above, ſhed thy ſelf into my ſoul, and fill every dark corner there with light and comfort; awake me and ſhake off my ſloth, moiſten the dry ſoil, and command fruitfulneſs out of that barren ground. Vouchſafe me,

Lord,

Lord, this bleſſing; for this alone is ſufficient for me, though thou ſhould'ſt think fit to deny or withdraw all, that nature can either beſtow, or is moſt fond of acquiring. Give me but this defence, and no temptation ſhall confound me, no calamity diſmay or make me afraid: For this alone is ſtrength and courage, wiſdom and protection; ſtronger than all my enemies, and wiſer than all human counſels and contrivances; the teacher of truth, the miſtreſs of holy diſcipline, the light of the ſoul, the ſolace of troubles, the reſolver of doubts; the balm of my wounds, the diſpeller of melancholy, the baniſher of fear, the cheriſher of devotion, the parent of contrition, the ſpring of holy and penitent tears, and of all thoſe ſtreams that waſh and purify polluted conſciences. What am I without this, but dry ſtubble, a rotten trunk, dead to good works, uſeleſs and unprofitable, and fit for nothing but to be trodden under foot, and caſt into the fire? Let therefore, O my God, I moſt humbly and heartily intreat, O let this grace and favour of thine *always prevent and follow, and make me continually to be given to all good works; that in all my actions begun; continued and ended in thee, I may glorify thy holy name; and finally by thy mercy obtain everlaſting life.* Amen, Amen.

Collect for xvii Sunday after *Trinity.*

Collect after Communion

CHAP.

CHAP. LXI.

Self-denial enforced from Chriſt's example.

CHRIST.

THE more, my ſon, thou forſakeſt thy ſelf, the nearer approaches thou makeſt toward me. As the deſires and intemperate love of things without, muſt be rejected, in order to the peace of one's own breaſt; ſo even the love of one's own ſelf muſt be laid aſide, in order to a perfect union with God. Learn therefore abſolutely to deny thy own will for mine, without contradiction or complaint. Follow me; *I am the way, the truth and the life.* Without the way can be no walking; without the truth no beneficial knowledge; without the life no living. Keep then in this way, for it is unalterable; believe in this truth, for it is infallible; hope for, and aſpire to this life, for it is true, happy, and eternal life. Continue in my way, and thou ſhalt know the truth, and the truth ſhall make thee free, that thou may'ſt inherit everlaſting life. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,* Mat. xix. If thou wilt know the truth, believe my words. If thou wilt be perfect, ſell that thou haſt. If thou wilt ſave thy life hereafter, deſpiſe it here. If thou wilt be exalted in heaven, abaſe thyſelf upon earth. If thou deſireſt to reign with me, take up the croſs with me. For none but they who imitate my croſs, are in the right way to happineſs and true glory.

Diſciple.] This way, O Lord, is ſtrait and rugged, ſuch as the world declines, and cannot endure to think of. Therefore I beg, thy grace would enable me to deſpiſe the world, and diſſent from the general Opinion of men, in compliance with thy command and example. *For the ſervant is not greater than his lord, nor the diſciple above his maſter*, John xv. Let thy ſervant then be guided in thy ſteps, for with thee is life and true holineſs. And all I read or hear from any other hand, gives me no refreſhment, no true delight.

Chriſt.] *If thou knoweſt theſe things, my ſon, happy art thou, if thou doeſt them*, John xiii. For practice and not knowledge, ſhall inherit the bleſſing. *He that keepeth my commandments, and doth them, he it is that loveth me, and I will love him* in return, *and manifeſt myſelf to him*, and ſet him upon a throne with me, in my father's kingdom.

Diſciple.] Lord, make me a partaker of this gracious promiſe. The croſs, which I have received from thy hand, I will bear with conſtancy even unto death. The life of a true chriſtian is indeed one continu'd croſs; but, ſince this is the way that leads to paradiſe, it is by no means fit, that I ſhould depart from it, or repent of my holy reſolutions, and good beginnings.

Come then, my chriſtian brethren, let us advance boldly. Take courage, for Chriſt is with us; he does not only lead us on, but will enable us to follow him. For his ſake we have taken up the croſs, and for his ſake we muſt perſevere in bearing it. Behold, the king and captain of our ſalvation marches at our head, ready to fight our battles. Let us, like gallant ſoldiers, follow; let us abandon our fears, and manfully prepare to die in the field; and not ſtain our honour, and loſe our crown, by deſerting from that ſervice, and thoſe hardſhips, which he hath made our duty and our glory.

CHAP. LXII.

Againſt being dejected with Temptations.

CHRIST.

JUdge not, my ſon, of thy favour and acceptance with God, by ſuch falſe meaſures, as the warmth of thy devotion, and the delight which reſults from the diſcharge of thy duty. For I am better pleaſed with humility and patience, and deep contrition of heart, in a diſconſolate and aflicted ſtate; than with an eager zeal, and the moſt exalted acts of an eaſy and proſperous piety. And whence is it, doſt thou think, that every little ſcandal, which detracts from thy reputation, ſo ſenſibly affects thee? Were it yet more to thy diſparagement, yet could it not be worth thy concern. This is not the firſt injury of this kind, nor is it like to be the laſt, if thou liveſt longer among men. And what is now new or ſtrange, ought not to ſurprize thee. I know thy courage and pretended bravery, while danger keeps its diſtance. Thou canſt diſcourſe like a philoſopher and a chriſtian, and give excellent advice to thy friends, when they labour under any diſtreſs; but when their caſe happens to be thy own, and ſome unexpected calamity comes home to thee; thy prudence and reſolution forſake thee quite, and thou ſtandeſt no leſs in need of the counſel and ſupport, which thou wert wont ſo freely to impart to others.

Let this experiment remind thee of thy own frailty, which, by ſuch Inſtances, appears not to be proof againſt the ſlighteſt misfortunes. For even theſe inſtances are greatly for thy advantage, and bring thee to a right and perfect underſtanding of thy own weak condition. Grow wiſer at leaſt at thy own expence; and as thy calmer reaſon ſhews it ought to be, ſo let thy behaviour manifeſt, that theſe tender reſentments of temporal evils are baniſhed out of thy mind. If thou canſt not entertain adverſity with abſolute indifference, yet let it not drive thee to deſpondency and wicked diſtruſt; and, however the firſt onſet may diſturb thee, yet rally quickly, and let it not long overpower thee. And tho' perhaps thou art not arrived to that perfection *of counting it all Joy, when thou falleſt into divers temptations*; *Jam.* i. Thou canſt not be excuſed from undergoing them with meekneſs, and reſignation, and patience. If thou art not yet got even thus far, but ſome indecent reflections riſe up in thy mind; yet let not this ſecret indignation break out into irreverent expreſſions, but *ſet a watch upon thy tongue, and keep the door of thy lips.* Pſal. cxli. & xxxix. Reſolve at leaſt, that *thy mouth ſhall not offend*; and though thy heart be hot within thee, yet let not any paſſionate complaints burſt out, which may caſt imputations upon the honour of God, impeach the juſtice and goodneſs of providence, or give offence to thy weaker brethren. For by thus manning and guarding well the outworks, thy inward commotions will in time be compoſed; thy ſorrow by degrees ſhall turn into joy, and the favour and mercy of God, be inclined to relieve and comfort thee, in recompence to thy reverence and ſubmiſſion to his good pleaſure.

As I live, ſaith the Lord, I will help thee ſpeedily, and comfort them who earneſtly ſeek me, who put their truſt

truſt in my ſalvation. Call up thy chriſtian fortitude, and ſink not under. thy burthen, but prepare for greater trials. If thy former troubles have overwhelmed thy ſpirits, prevailed over thy temper and thy virtue; let not the remembrance of our former trials diſcourage thee. *The Lord knoweth whereof thou art made, he remembreth that thou art but duſt:* Pſal. ciii. a man, and not God; fleſh and not angel or unbodied ſpirit; how canſt thou then expect to continue in an undiſturb'd ſtate of goodneſs? How ſhould thy virtue be above the ſhocks and ſeverities of temptation, when even the angels kept not their firſt eſtate, and man in paradiſe ſo ſoon fell from innocence? I am thy ſole protection, who raiſe the ſouls dejected with ſorrow, preſerve thoſe who acknowledge and bewail their own weakneſs, and glorify with my ſelf the humble chriſtians, who are aſhamed of their follies and miſcarriages.

Diſciple.] Bleſſed be thy mercy, for the gracious words, which drop from thy mouth, ſoft as the gentle dew, and ſweeter than honey and the honeycomb. What would become of me, in the extremity of my diſtreſs and anguiſh of my ſoul, did not thy promiſes and ſeaſonable inſtructions refreſh and comfort me? But be it as thou wilt; for I cannot think it any great matter, how long or boiſterous my voyage is, so thou at laſt conduct me ſafe to that peaceful haven, where good men are at reſt. Let my afflictions be never ſo great, ſo thou grant a happy iſſue, and turn my ſufferings to good effect. But my condition in this life adverſe or proſperous, no proſperity will profit, no adverſity harm me, but in proportion to the ſtate in which I die. And if I go well out of the world, my continuance in it cannot be ſo troubleſome, that I ſhould have cauſe to repent or complain. Order my affairs then as thou pleaſeſt; but always, O my God, remember me for good. Lead me in the right and ready way to thy kingdom, diſpoſe all my actions towards the attainment of ſalvation, and *let me ſo paſs through things temporal, that I finally loſe not the things eternal.* Amen.

CHAP. LXIII.

Againſt prying into things too high for us, and pretending to fathom the depths of God and providence.

CHRIST.

DO not, my ſon, take upon thee to diſpute, or determine any thing concerning abſtruſe and difficult Points; nor too curiouſly enquire into thoſe myſterious diſpenſations, which God hath purpoſely concealed from thee. Concern not thy ſelf about the amazing diſtributions of grace or Providence; why one man is forſaken and in disfavour with God, another ſo ſurprizingly indulged by him; this perſon exerciſed with afflictions and ſorrows, or that ſo gently dealt with, ſo unaccountably exalted. Theſe are things out of thy ſphere: and all the parts and penetration, the acuteſt wit, and acquired improvements of man, are much too ſhort and feeble, to enter into the reaſons of the divine counſels. If therefore ſuch curioſities return upon thee, look upon them as the ſuggeſtions of the devil, by which he labours to diſquiet and unſettle thee. If man, impertinently buſy, require a ſolution of ſuch difficulties, content thy ſelf with that general anſwer of the prophet: *righteous art thou, O Lord, and juſt are thy Judgments*; *Jer.* xii. 1. *The Judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether*; *his righteouſneſs*

eouſneſs ſtandeth like the ſtrong Mountain, Pſa. xix. fix'd and immoveable, eminent and conſpicuous; and *his Judments are like the great Deep: Pſ.* xxxvi. 7. a vaſt and dark abyſs, ſuch as we cannot ſee to the bottom of, or fathom with the ſhort line of a finite underſtanding.

My methods and dealings are to be admired, not ſawcily criticized upon, by my own creatures. For no creature can have a capacity proportioned to them; and what men cannot comprehend, they ſhould not preſume to take into examination.

As little ought they to enquire and diſpute concerning the merits or the preference of good men: Which of the ſaints excel in virtue, or is greateſt in the kingdom of heaven. For theſe are queſtions, in which men are no ways concerned, ſuch as engender ſtriſe and debate, and turn to no good account. They cheriſh arrogance and pride, envy and faction, while men break into parties, and each contends for the preheminence of him, whoſe order and patronage he is devoted to, or whom his own vain imagination inclines him moſt to honour. The effect of this is very viſible, and the miſchiefs, that ſpring from ſuch an impertinent zeal, exceeding numerous and lamentable: The controverſy, neither poſſible to be decided, nor worth deciding, if it were. And, if thoſe ſaints have any knowledge of what paſſes here below, this indiſcreet and partial zeal cannot but be highly diſpleaſing to them. For I am not a God of contention and faction, but of order, and peace, and love. Theſe are the genuine product of true modeſty and humility, of ſuch as eſteem others better than themſelves; but inconſiſtent with that bold aſſuming temper, which is reſtleſs and diſcontented, if any other be preferred before them. It may be, affection and honeſt zeal may diſpoſe ſome men to be more liberal in their reſpect on this or that ſide of the differing parties; but do not ſuch conſider, that ſuch affection is not the effect of grace or religion, but merely of human infirmity? Theſe are ſuch prepoſſeſſions as I can never be capable of; for all the ſaints are equally mine. My hand made them men, my aſſiſting grace made them ſaints; I enriched them with virtues, and crowned them all with glory. I know what each have done, what occaſions they had, what improvements they made. I foreknew them before time was; they choſe not me, but I them; and ſingled them out of the common multitude. I drew them with the cords of love and mercy, conducted them thro' great variety of trials and afflictions; ſuſtain'd them with uncommon comforts and recruits, enabled them to perſevere, and rewarded the conſtancy my ſelf had given. I know the firſt and laſt; and my fatherly, my inexpreſſible affection extends to them all. For all are inſtrnments of my praiſe and glory, ſo many monuments and eternal trophies of my goodneſs; freely advanced to what they are, by my bounty and favour, without any right or antecedent merit of their own. He therefore, who deſpiſes the leaſt of theſe, is guilty of diſreſpect to the greateſt; for this contempt reflects at laſt on me, the author of their virtues and their happineſs; and therefore in me alone ſhould all the honour, pretended to be paid to them, centre. Their intereſts and properties are no longer ſeperate; for charity hath made them one, and knit them into the ſame miſtical body, whoſe honours, and advantages, and inclinations, and joys, are inſeperably the ſame. Nay, which is the utmoſt perfection of charity, they all conſpire in loving me more than themſelves, or any merits or reſpects of their own; for, being in that happy ſtate exalted above themſelves, they are entirely taken up with the love and honour of God. This is their happineſs and utmoſt end. Nothing can divert them to meaner proſpects, no mixture of ſelf love comes in betwixt, to damp the pure flames of this love everlaſting.

Away then with theſe vain curioſities, theſe eager diſputes, concerning the condition of the Bleſſed; which bertay a prevalence of carnal and ſenſual appetites, ſuch as have no notions higher than particular gains and ſeparate intereſts! Nature and partiality incline ſuch diſpoſitions, to act, and deſire, and love, and hate, upon private and perſonal conſiderations; and then they fondly transfer the ſame idea's and the ſame behaviour, from earthly to heavenly objects. Alas! the difference is the wideſt in the world, and nothing in nature ſo diſtant, as the fooliſh imaginations of ſuch novices in matters of another world, from thoſe juſter apprehenſions, which minds, enlightned from above, entertain upon theſe occaſions. Be not too curious then, my ſon, in matters above thy capacity; but rather let it be thy care and conſtant thought, how thou may'ſt be found, tho' it be but the leaſt, in the kingdom of heaven. For couldſt thou underſtand all myſteries and all knowledge; couldſt thou diſtinctly view the ſeveral orders and places of each angel and ſpirit above; yet what would this avail, farther than as it excited in thee leſs for thy own, and greater, zeal for my honour? The man who ſeriouſly reflects upon the multitude of his own ſins, and the defects and worthleſneſs of his own virtues, how few, how poor, how far ſhort they are of the perfection of thoſe bright examples heretofore, employs his mind upon a ſubject, which God likes much better than ſuch empty ſpeculations of them who have ſet thoſe examples.

This is a controverſy, which they never trouble themſelves about. For they aſcribe nothing to any deſerts of their own, but acknowledge the whole of what they have and are, to be the ſole effect of my infinite liberality and love. And their happineſs and honour is compleat, by the joy they take in the fruition of God and his glory. The more exalted any of theſe are, the more modeſt they are; the more dear, and the more like to me. Thus much is intimated by that viſion, where they are ſaid to *caſt their crowns at the feet of God, and falling down upon their faces before the throne, and before the lamb, to worſhip him that liveth for ever and ever*, Rev. x.

How abſurd is it to ſee men zealouſly contending who is greateſt in the kingdom of God, who are not ſolicitous in the mean while to know, what much more nearly concerns them, whether they ſhall have any place at all there themſelves? And yet to be leaſt there is to be great, for even the leaſt are ſons and heirs of God. *A little one ſhall become a thouſand, and the child ſhall die a hundred years old, but the ſinner of an hundred years old ſhall be accurſed.* Iſa, lx. 22. --- lxv. 20. When the diſciples enquired who ſhould be the greateſt in the kingdom of heaven, this was the anſwer made to that demand: *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye ſhall in no wiſe enter into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoſoever ſhall humble himſelf as this little child, the ſame*

ſame ſhall be greateſt in the kingdom of heaven. Matth. xviii. Wo to them who diſdain to imitate the humility and meekneſs of little chldren! for ſtrait and low is the gate of heaven, as the towrings of ambition, and ſwellings of bloated vanity can never ſtoop to, or enter at. Wo to the rich, who have their conſolation in this world, for while the poor are admitted into paradiſe, they ſhall ſtand weeping and wailing without! But rejoice, ye meek, and humble, and poor, for yours is the kingdom of God; if ye heartily embrace and obey the truth, and be rich in patience and good diſpoſitions.

CHAP. LXIV.

God is all the good man's hope and confidence.

DISCIPLE.

IN whom, O Lord, is my hope, while here below? or what, of all the things under heaven, can miniſter peace and comfort to my ſoul? *Truly my hope is even in thee*, and my joy and truſt in thy mercy alone. When were my affairs in ill condition with thee? Or what can prevent my being exquiſitely miſerable without thee? Poverty for thy ſake is infinitely rather to be choſen, than all the riches and greatneſs in the world, in exchange for thy favour; and earth and exile with that favour more bliſful, than heaven without the fruition of thee. For heaven is heaven by thy bleſſed preſence; and where that does not reſide, all is death and the grave, and hell. Thou art my deſire and my portion, and therefore to thee my ſighs and groans, and cries and prayers, continually aſcend. I have no other ſtay or refuge, who can ſend ſeaſonable and ſuitable relief to all my dangers and neceſſities; but thou alone art my hope and truſt, my effectual comforter, and moſt faithful friend.

Others purſue their own private ends and advantages, but thou ſeekeſt my improvement and happineſs, and ordereſt all things for my good. Even my temptations and afflictions are appointed to do me ſervice. Theſe are the methods, by which the Fidelity of thy choſen is brought to the teſt; and even the harſher diſpenſations ought as much to engage my affections, and excite my gratitude and praiſe, as the moſt refreſhing comforts, and moſt deſired proſperity. In thee therefore, O my God, I repoſe my ſoul; thou art my ſanctuary, where I deſpoſite the burthen of all my griefs and troubles. For there alone can they and I be ſafe, ſince all things elſe are feeble and uncertain, neither able, nor always diſpoſed, to comfort or protect me. Friends cannot do what they wiſh; great men will not, or cannot help; the wiſe, without thee miſtake their meaſures; books are but inſignificant diverſion, and yield no ſolid conſolation; wealth cannot buy eaſe and peace of mind; fortreſſes and coverts cannot hide me from calamity, unleſs thou be with thoſe friends, and ſtrengthen thoſe counſellors, and inſtruct me by thoſe books, and aſſiſt me in the uſe of wealth, and guard that ſtrong retreat. For peace and happineſs are entirely in thee. Thou art the end, the ſum, the ſource of all good; the perfection of life, the depth of wiſdom and knowledge: And hope in thee is the ſureſt, the moſt ſenſible ſupport thy ſervants can have, in the miſeries of this mortal life.

To thee therefore lift I up my eyes, O father of mercies and lover of men. Comfort my ſoul in trouble,

ble, and purify it with thy grace, that it may be a clean and holy habitation, ſuch as thy glorious majeſty does not diſdain to dwell in. Let no Impurity be left in this temple; but cleanſe it thoroughly from every thing, which may offend thoſe eyes, that cannot behold iniquity or uncleanneſs. Look upon me in thy great goodneſs, and, after the multitude of thy mercies, hear the Prayer of thy poor ſervant, now wandring in a diſtant, and deſolate wilderneſs. O keep my ſoul and deliver me, lead me ſafe thro' this vale of ſorrow and danger, and conduct me, by the way of peace and holineſs, to my own home, even my heavenly country, the land of promiſe, the preſence and eternal fruition of my God. *Amen.*

The End of the Third Book.

OF THE IMITATION OF *JESUS CHRIST.*

BOOK IV.

Of the Lord's Supper.

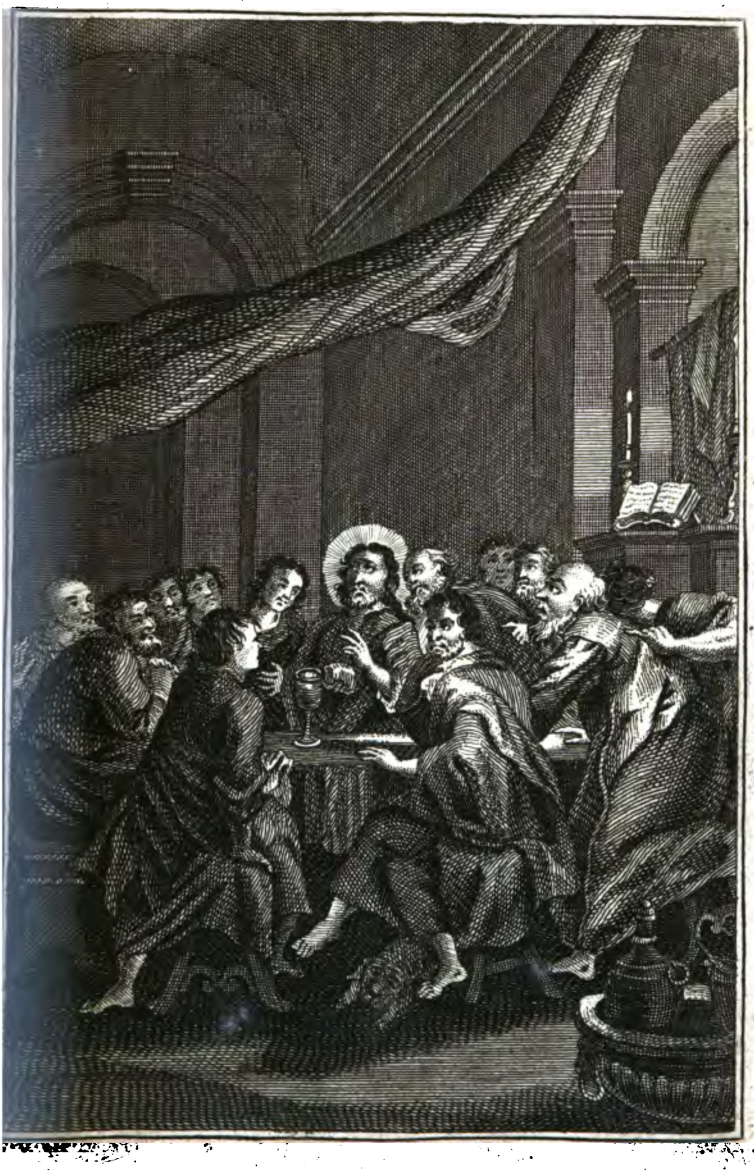
CHAP. I.

The reverence due to this holy ſacrament.

The INVITATION.

CHRIST.

COME *unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refreſh you,* Mat. xi. 28. *The bread that I will give, is my fleſh; which I will give for the life of the world,* John vi. 51. *Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me,* 1 Cor. ix. 24. *He that*



that eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him, John vi. 56. *The Words which I ſpeak unto you, they are ſpirit, and they are life,* John 63.

Diſciple.] Theſe, bleſſed Jeſus, are thy words, on which my ſoul ſecurely reſts it ſelf; becauſe my ſaviour who is eternal truth, hath ſpoken them. Theſe the gracious and condeſcending Invitations, which I find interſperſed in holy ſcripture, as occaſions offered for making them. Theſe therefore I will receive with holy gratitude, with humble but entire confidence; and engrave them upon my ſoul in deep and indelible characters. For tho' they be thine, as the author; yet do I claim a property in them, and juſtly call them mine too, as a perſon, for whoſe benefit and ſalvation thou wert pleaſed to utter them. Moſt gladly therefore will I receive them at thy mouth, that the authority of the divine ſpeaker may make the more effectual Impreſſion. And ſtupid I muſt be beyond imagination, if encouragement ſo ſweet, ſo kind, do not awaken, and very ſenſibly affect me. But alas! at the ſame time, that thy call inclines me to come, my own grievous tranſgreſſions fly in my face, and the terrors of a guilty conſcience keep me away. Thy goodneſs, I own, imps my wings, and bids me boldly attempt the raiſing my ſoul to heaven and happineſs; but I feel the bitter remembrance of my ſins checking thoſe flights, laying me proſtrate upon earth, reproaching my better hopes, and nobler intentions, with preſumption; and ever depreſſing my mind, with the intolerable burden of heinous and numberleſs offences, which render me unworthy of the leaſt of all thy mercies.

In this perplexity of thought thou haſt moſt ſeaſonably interpoſed with thy reviving comforts; haſt made that faith and truſt a virtue and a duty, which I ſhould have ſhunned as a crime, and, conſcious of my own vileneſs, durſt not have entertained. Thou commandeſt me to raiſe my dejected looks, and direct my ſteps to heaven; and I ſeriouſly deſire, (as who indeed can but deſire?) life and glory everlaſting. Thou exhorteſt me to begin to live immediately, by taking the ſweet foretaſtes of immortality, in that bread, which is the food of ſouls. Thy kind invitation therefore I earneſtly attend to, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refreſh you.* O harmonious ſound in the ears of a ſinner! How joyful is the news to a poor, loſt, impotent wretch! One, who, in a due ſenſe of his own vileneſs, thinks even the meaneſt of thy gifts, which conduce to his bodily ſuſtenance, too good for him. To be invited to eat of thy moſt bleſſed body, and admitted to partake of the lively figures of thy divine blood; the commemorations of thy death, and ſure pledges of ſalvation! Lord! What am I, that I ſhould thus be permitted to approach thee? Nay rather, that thou ſhould'ſt come to me, and dwell under my roof? O unſpeakable condeſcenſion! O unexampled kindneſs! Behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee, and yet thou vouchſafeſt to take up thy abode with man, that is a worm? The angels are not pure in thy ſight, and yet thou ſayeſt to wretched ſinners, *Come unto me, ye that travel, and are heavy laden.*

I find my ſelf at a loſs, whence ſuch aſtoniſhing kindneſs ſhould proceed, or what may be the meaning of ſo friendly an invitation. My miſdeeds teſtify againſt me, and I am but too ſenſible, that no merit of mine could induce my Lord to make it. So far from that, that, even now it is made, I know not with what face I can either approach my God and Saviour, or bring him to me, or hope to keep him there; him, whom I have ſo often, ſo grievouſly provoked, ſo juſtly made my enemy for ever. But, were there no demerits of my own to diſcourage this attempt, yet, who am I, that the majeſty of heaven and earth ſhould ſtoop ſo low, as to enter under my roof? Behold, angels and archangels, principalities and powers fall down and worſhip thee: Behold, the brighteſt ſaints, and ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, tremble at thy preſence, and yet thou ſayeſt, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.* Had this been ſpoke by any mouth but thine, men could not have believed it. Had not thy command inſpired this confidence, ſinners durſt not have attempted to move towards thee, but would have rather uſed their utmoſt induſtry, to flee from the preſence of their maſter and judge. But be it ſo; we are commanded to come to thee; and thou vouchſafeſt to come to us. Yet what ſolemnity, what preparation, can be ſufficient for thy reception? *Noah*, that righteous perſon, employed a hundred years in building an ark by God's direction, for the ſaving himſelf and a very few ſouls beſides; and how ſhall I be qualified, by the application of an hour or two only, to entertain the maker of the univerſe, and meet him with that humble reverence, which is due to ſo terrible, ſo glorious a creator, from the vileſt and moſt unworthy of all his creatures? Thy ſervant *Moſes* admitted into familiar converſation with thee, by a privilege not imparted to the reſt of mankind, framed an ark of cedar-wood, and overlaid it with pure gold, to be a fit repoſitory for the tables of the law; And ſhall I, wretched rotten trunk, take upon me without ceremony to receive the almighty maker and giver of that law? *Solomon*, the wiſeſt of princes, ſpent ſeven years in building a magnificent temple to the honour of thy name; eight years were taken up in the dedication of it; a thouſand peace-offerings were then ſacrificed upon the new erected altar; and the ark of the covenant with ſound of trumpet, and other holy ſolemnities, was conducted into the place appointed to receive it: And how unlike to theſe great ſaints am I, duſt and aſhes, chief of ſinners and meaneſt of men? How ſhall I pretend to invite thee my God into my houſe, who am ſo far from ſpending a number of years or days, that I can very hardly afford one poor half hour? Nay, would to God that wretched remnant of one poor half hour were but employed, as attentively, as devoutly, as it ought to be, to provide thee a clear and acceptable apartment, in this homely cottage of my heart. How eager, O my God, how perſevering was the zeal of thoſe ancient worthies? How cold, how ſhort is mine, when I ſet my ſelf to prepare for meeting and receiving thee? My thoughts, alas! are very ſeldom conſiſtent, but a thouſand wandrings and impertinent diſtractions intrude upon me; and hardly can I collect the powers of my ſoul into ſo compoſed a frame, as becomes our more immediate addreſſes to thee. I am not unmindful of thy preſence then, more peculiar than at other times; I reflect upon the indecency and ſin of ſuffering my heart to divide it ſelf; I know, that when an honour ſo great is intended me, as that of receiving the Lord of men, and angels, it ought to enlarge and devote its whole capacity to thee. And yet I cannot fix and fill it with this one object; but, in deſpight of all my endeavours and ſelf-reproaches, frailty will prevail.

Nay, the ſame care and reverence were much too little, where the dignity of the thing is ſo much greater. For what compariſon can there be between an ark with its ceremonial ſymboles, and the myſtical body of my bleſſed ſaviour, with all the wondrous effects of his paſſion? How poor and deſpicable were thoſe legal ſacrifices, whoſe greateſt excellence and commendation was, that they typified, and foretold, that one only perfect and ſufficient ſacrifice upon the croſs, which in this ſacrament we at once commemorate, and apply the virtue of to our ſelves? If then the patriarchs and prophets heretofore expreſs'd their zeal and devotion, by all the marks of reverence and profound reſpect, to thoſe figures of the divine preſence, and ſhadows of good things to come; ſhall I be negligent in my preparations to meet my God himſelf; ſhall I not indeed as much exceed the great ſolicitude and pious affection, which kings and peaſants, rich and poor, univerſally expreſs'd; as the ſpiritual participation of my Lord's body and blood, and the moſt precious pledges of his love and my ſalvation, excel the carnal diſpenſation of a figurative tabernacle, and the very diſtant and dark ſignifications of future bleſſings? They adored the repreſentation; and ſhall I diſregard the ſubſtance, the end, the perfection, of all the levitical inſtitutions, the ſum of all Gods mercies, and man's hopes? If even *David* thought it no Diſparagement to his royall character, to lay out his time, his ſtudy, his ſtrength, in the ſervice of the tabernacle; to compoſe pſalms for the worſhip of God, to ſtring his own harp, and himſelf join and preſide in the Concert; nay, even to dance before the ark, when brought up to its Place, and, by his own example, to teach his Subjects to exert their utmoſt might, and employ every faculy of body and Soul, in expreſſing their zeal and joy: What holy gladneſs then is due, what inflamed devotion to him, whom *David* in ſpirit called Lord? What ſongs of praiſe and thanks ſhould adorn that ſolemn feaſt, where Chriſt exhibits to us the heavenly manna, the food of ſouls? How ſhall we labour to omit no teſtimony of our reverence, no ſign of honour this king of heaven does us, when he vouchſafes to come home, and dwell in our hearts; and, by the conſecrated elements, verily and indeed to give and unite himſelf to every faithful ſoul?

See with what eager zeal vain men make long pilgrimages, and fly to the remoteſt corners of the world, only to gain a ſight of the boaſted reliques of ſome celebrated ſaints; to be entertained with long accounts of miracles, to kiſs a ſilken rag, or proſtrate themſelves before a bone ſet in gold! But alas! were all the legends theſe fond men give credit to, moſt true, yet what is here, that can deſerve their expenſive pretences, to ſanctity, or command veneration, in any degree comparable to that ſaving and myſtical preſence of God himſelf upon the altar? The poor effects of ſuch miſtaken zeal are but too manifeſt. Men generally go for curioſity and diverſion, not for the improvement of their Minds; and they return accordingly: Better in no reſpect, except in having ſeen a thing much talk'd of, which they never had ſeen before. 'Tis to be hoped, but few are ſo blind, ſo wretchedly deluded, to imagine, that ſuch penances and painful travels can avail there any thing, without true contrition, and ſerious reformation of life. And where theſe are, much more ſubſtantial advantages may be had a great deal nearer home. For lo! the King of ſaints invites us, he gives the ſure and bleſſed fruits of righteouſneſs and ſalvation to all, who worthily receive him. An invitation, in compliance with which, levity and ſenſuality, a wandring head, or a roving humour, have no part, but all is done, by the wiſe and well-weighed grace of a ſtedfaſt faith, the comfortable aſſurances of a devout hope, and the affectionate zeal of a ſincere and holy love.

O mighty maker of the world, whom though we plainly ſee in all thy works of wonder, yet thou thy ſelf remaineſt inviſible; how aſtoniſhing are thy diſpenſations to the ſons of men? How ſweet, how comfortable, how full of efficacy, yet ſtill how unaccountable to ſenſe and reaſon, are the methods, by which thou art pleaſed to communicate thy ſelf to the faithful in the bleſſed ſacrament? Here thy choſen and worthy ſervants partake of that heavenly food, which nouriſhes their ſouls to life immortal; while reprobate and bold intruders take empty elements, void of ſpiritual ſubſtance, and ſaving power. This is a myſtery above our comprehenſion. This kindles in us holy zeal, and engages our devoteſt affections. And by receiving creatures, in themſelves of mean and common efficacy, we find our weakneſſes ſtrengthned, our decays recruited, and our love of thee and virtue ſtrangely heightned and confirmed. Who can expreſs, who can conceive, that hidden, that amazing diſtinction made in this holy ſupper; whoſe graces and good effects are ſo liberally diſtributed to the faithful; and yet unbelievers and impenitent men have no portion, no experience at all of them? Who can diſcover thoſe myſtical methods, by which ſpiritual grace is conveyed with bodily ſuſtenance? How bread and wine could be made inſtruments of ſtrengthning the ſoul; of purging away the blemiſhes and reproaches of nature; healing her deformities and diſeaſes; taking out the ſtains of ſin and vicious habits contracted by converſing with an impious world; ſubduing furious paſſions; rectifying and moderating irregular deſires; invigorating both the body and mind of feeble ſinners at once.

Such is the new Life, and health, and ſprightly vigor, which good and godly men experimentally find upon theſe occaſions. And who then can ſufficiently lament the general lukewarmneſs, the cold neglect, the ſenſleſs ſtupidity of mankind upon this occaſion? How regardleſs are they of Chriſt? How hardly prevailed upon to accept their own mercy, their ſanctification, their redemption, in the ways preſcribed by himſelf for imparting theſe glorious advantages? How rudely do they turn their backs upon that feaſt, which creates joy in heaven, and preſerves earth and its inhabitants from miſery and ruin! Oh! the wretched blindneſs, the inflexible obſtinacy and hardneſs of mens hearts, which will not ſee, or ſeeing, will not value ſo ineſtimable benefits; which turn their very happineſs into an occaſion of deſtruction, by ſuffering the frequent opportunities, and the very eaſineſs of attaining theſe precious privileges, to bring them into a general diſeſteem; which make the greatneſs of their maſter's love, the abundant proviſion for their health and ſupport, a pretence for ſtarving in the midſt of plenty.

For I can ſcarce perſuade my ſelf, but that, if this holy ſacrament could be had in one place, and from one ſingle hand only, men would with eager zeal repair thither, and vaſt crowds of people ſtrive to partake of ſo rare a bleſſing. But now, when every church, and every feſtival, which every prieſt, and almoſt every lord's day, exhibits this delicious food, brings it home to our doors, and offers it to as many as are religiouſly and devoutly diſpoſed to accept the gracious tenders; when every ſermon exhorts, intreats, conjures us to be thus happy; we turn our backs, and ſlight the cheap, the eaſy favour. Yet manifeſt it is, that the kindneſs of our Lord is not the leſs, but much the greater, for putting the terms of our ſalvation within our own power, and leaving the whole blame and condemnation at our own doors, if we refuſe to take what without our fault we can never want. And ſhall we then proceed to diſlike and diſdain our greateſt bleſſings? To think them leſs valuable for being more common? No, bleſſed Jeſus! We will acknowledge thy unſpeakable bounty; we will moſt thankfully confeſs thee the good ſhepherd, who haſt provided ſuch rich ſuſtenance for thy ſheep, and leadeſt them out into fat paſtures. Bleſſed be thy eternal mercy, who vouchſafeſt to give thy body, not only for, but to thy poor ſervants in this diſconſolate ſtate: Who not content to ſacrifice it once upon the croſs, offereſt it daily in the ſacrament; and haſt ſilenced all the fears and melancholy miſgivings of our own guilt and unworthineſs, by that moſt tender and compaſſionate, that moſt extenſive and univerſal invitation; *come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden* with the burden of your ſins, *and I will refreſh you.*

CHAP. II.

The love of God to the ſoul manifeſted in this ſacrament.

CHRIST.

BEhold, Lord, thus encouraged, thus invited, I come; but I do not preſume to do ſo, *truſting in my, own righteouſneſs, but in thy manifold and great mercies.* I feel, alas! my weakneſſes and wants; and betake my ſelf to thee for relief; ſick and diſeaſed, I fly to the phyſician of ſouls; hungry and thirſty to this fountain of living water, and bread of life, poor and needy, to the bountiful king of heaven; a ſervant to his kind maſter; a creature to his compaſſionate creator, who hateth nothing that he hath made; and a forlorn diſconſolate wretch, to thee, the holy, the eternal, the only comforter. But whence is this to me that my God ſhould vouchſafe to come unto me? Or who am I, that thou ſhould'ſt thus liberally communicate to me thy own ſelf? How ſhall a wicked ſinner dare to appear before thee? Or how can'ſt thou, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, endure to make ſuch condeſcending approaches to a ſoul polluted with ſin and with uncleanneſs? Thou ſeeſt my very inward parts, and knoweſt I have nothing in me that is good, nothing to invite ſuch mercy, nothing fit for the reception of ſo pure, ſo glorious a majeſty. I will therefore moſt humbly confeſs my own vileneſs, and thy unſpeakable goodneſs; I will moſt thankfully praiſe, and admire, and adore thy marvellous love, and exceeding abundant grace. For this is purely thy own act. Nothing on my part could deſerve, nothing could move thee to it. The more unworthy I am, the more conſpicuous is thy goodneſs; the more amazing thy mercy and condeſcenſion. Since therefore thou art pleaſed to ſtoop ſo low, be it unto me according to thy word. Since thou haſt thought fit to command my approach, I will moſt gladly teſtify my ready obedience; and only ſupplicate, that my own ſinfulneſs may not render me odious in thy ſight, nor fruſtrate theſe ineſtimable mercies to me.

O ſweeteſt, kindeſt ſaviour, what humble Reverence, what devout thankfulneſs can be great enough? what praiſe can be ſufficiently expreſſive of that love, which admits ſo poor, ſo miſerable a wretch to the participation of thoſe divine myſteries, the Dignity whereof no tongue of men or angels can worthily ſet forth? But when I thus addreſs my Lord, and am allowed ſuch intimate familiarities with him, what ſort of reflections ought to fill my breaſt? To approach thee with all the profound reſpect due upon ſuch occaſions, is impoſſible. I will therefore ſupply my want of ability by the earneſtneſs of my Zeal; and moſt hnmbly beſeech thee, to accept thoſe hearty deſires of the ineſtimable benefit, by which my ſoul and all its faculties, thirſt and pant moſt impatiently after thee and thy righteouſneſs. When thou art the ſubject of my mediations the matter is too vaſt for regular thought; the idea too dazzling and bright for a finite underſtanding; and I quickly feel my ſelf loſt in wonder and aſtoniſhment. I will therefore turn my eyes inward, and entertain my ſelf with the leſs pleaſing indeed, but no leſs profitable, proſpect of my own unworthineſs; laying my ſoul low before thee, and from the ſenſe, how little, how mere a nothing, how much worſe than nothing I am, will take the meaſure of thy greatneſs, and form ideas of thy infinite goodneſs. I praiſe thee, O my God, from the bottom of my heart; and extol thy name for evermore. I deſpiſe and deteſt my ſelf; and with the deepeſt humility put my ſoul into thy protection that thy favour and grace may exalt me, and make this deſpicable wretch ſomething, who, without thy mercy, is leſs than nothing.

O the wide extremes! O the unmeaſurable diſtance! between God, the eſſence and perfection of holineſs, and man, the very abſtract of filth and ſin! yet does this God extend compaſſion, and look down with pity on thoſe who are not worthy ſo much as to lift up their eyes to him. yet he comes to us; and delights to be with us promiſes to dwell with us; calls, and intreats, and importunes us, to ſit and eat deliciouſly at his table. He invites the naked and hungry, the beggars and vagabonds, to his own table *Pſal.* lxxviii.; feeds them with *angels food*, feaſts them with the bread of heaven, even that *living bread which came down from heaven*, on purpoſe *to give life to the world*. *John* vi.

Oh! Whence could all this mighty love proceed; what account can be given of ſuch wonderful condeſcenſion, ſuch tender regards, to loſt unworthy creatures? What thanks, what praiſe, what humble adoration do thoſe ſo highly obliged, ſo particularly favoured creatures owe in return for them? How wiſe, how merciful, was thy deſign in the firſt inſtitution

tion of this holy ſupper? How rich, how delightful a banquet haſt thou prepared for thy gueſts, by ordering thy own body and blood for the myſtical entertainment of the faithful? How aſtoniſhing are the operations of thy grace and power! How incomprehenſible the methods of fulfilling the moſt true promiſe! Thou ſpakeſt the word in the beginning and all things were created; and by the ſame almighty word, thou commandeſt bread and wine, and they nouriſh ſouls to life eternal.

This is indeed a ſubject, contrived for the exerciſe, not ſo much of our reaſon as of our faith. We are not able to account for the mighty efficacy of elements, in their own nature contemptible and weak. We know not how that God, whom the whole heavens cannot contain, ſhould dwell in the hearts of men: But this we know, that thou haſt promiſed, by and with this ſacrament, to enter into, and abide in, all worthy receivers; and thy truth is ſufficient to ſilence and vanquiſh all thoſe imaginary difficulties, which cavilling and curious men form to themſelves about it. Come then, and enter, and live, and reign in me for ever cleanſe and adorn with thy grace the place of thy peculiar reſidence; preſerve my heart and body free from all impurity, and remove far away whatever may be offenſive to thee let this veſſel of mine be conſtantly poſſeſſed in ſanctification and honour; that, with a peaceful and ſpotleſs conſcience, I may frequently approach, and devoutly receive theſe adorable myſteries, which thou haſt appointed, for the comfort and ſalvation of thoſe, whom the king of heaven delights to honour; and for pious and lively commemorations of thy own moſt bitter, but moſt meritorious and precious death.

And thou, my ſoul, rejoice and be exceeding glad for ſo noble a favour, ſo heavenly a refreſhment, ſo rich a conſolation, to ſupport and ſweeten thy paſſage through this vale of tears and miſery. For, every time thou attendeſt theſe holy myſteries, thou *doſt ſpiritually eat the fleſh of Chriſt, and drink his blood*; thou doſt act as it were over again the work of thy redemption, and with great effect partake of thy ſaviour's merit and ſufferings. For his love continues always the ſame, and the excellence and worth of his propitiation is an inexhauſtible ſpring of mercy. Come therefore hither with new exalted zeal, enlarge thy heart and its deſires, and doubt not, but thou ſhalt, at every approach, return with freſh and plentiful acceſſions of grace. Let not the frequency abate thy devotion; for this favour ſhould always ſeem great, this feaſt always honourable, and the delights of it always new. And, by the force of pious meditation, the myſtery will affect thy wondring mind at every repetition, as if the ſon of God were juſt at that moment born from the womb of his immaculate mother; as if thy ſuffering redeemer were in that inſtant labouring under all his agonies; and thy own eyes beheld him hanging, and bleeding, and dying, on the croſs.

CHAP. III.

The benefit of communicating often.

DISCIPLE.

BEhold, I come to thee, O Lord, fervently deſiring to partake of thy promiſe, to be enriched with thy gifts, and feaſted with that heavenly banquet, which thy compaſſion hath prepared for hungry and drooping ſouls. I know, O Lord, in thee is all I need, all I can deſire; my health and ſafety, my hope and ſtrength, my honour and glory. *Quicken* therefore and cheriſh *the ſoul of thy ſervant*, for *unto thee*, O bleſſed Jeſus, *do I lift up my ſoul.* It is my earneſt deſire to receive thee with a becoming reverence and devotion. The height of my ambition is to bring thee home to my houſe; and, with *Zaccheus* of old, to be bleſſed, and reckoned by thee among the true ſpiritual *ſons of Abraham.* My ſoul deſires to be fed and ſtrengthened by thy body, and my heart to be entirely knit and inſeparably united to thee.

Give me but thy ſelf, and whatever elſe thou withholdeſt, I am ſatisfied. For all things beſides are miſerable comforters, and rather aggravate than abate my wretchedneſs. Without thy conſolations I am not able to ſubſiſt: And therefore I feel an abſolute neceſſity of coming to thee often for freſh ſupplies of grace and ſtrength. My ſpirits languiſh and ſink, and, if I faſt too long, I periſh for want of ſeaſonable relief from this heavenly ſuſtenance. Thy bowels heretofore yearned over the multitudes, who came from far to hear thy ſaving doctrine, and to be healed of their bodily diſtempers. Thou would'ſt not ſend them away empty, but wer't pleaſed to feed them by a miracle, leſt they ſhould faint by the way. *Mat.* xv. Extend the ſame compaſſion towards me, and let this ſacrament ſuſtain my fainting ſoul, in this wilderneſs, barren and remote from any true comfort. For thou art the ſweet, the reviving food of ſinking and weary ſpirits; and they, who worthily partake of this repaſt, are nouriſhed unto life eternal. I am ſadly ſenſible of my infirmities, and frequent relapſes into ſin, and how urgent my occaſions are for theſe repeated refreſhments. I quickly cool after my warmeſt reſolutions; my purpoſes of goodneſs ſicken and languiſh apace; and theſe decays muſt end in ſpiritual death, did not my prayers, my ſelf-examinations, my confeſſions and holy ſorrows, preparatory to this holy feaſt, often return: did not this divine ſuſtenance cleanſe and renew my affections; confirm my purpoſes of doing well, excite and inflame my zeal and love for God and good works. Obſtinate faſting would not more certainly quench all my Vital heat, and deſtroy my body; than too long abſtinence from this ſpiritual food will waſte and quite extinguiſh all the operations of grace in my ſoul and all its powers of living well.

I find and heartily bewail, a fatal tendency to evil; and my experience, from my very cradle, ſhews me, how ſtrongly I incline to ſin, and fall from bad to worſe, except a remedy from above check this indiſpoſition, and ſuccour and ſupport me from plunging into hell. This holy communion is that remedy. It calls back my wandering ſteps, prevents my falling by relapſe or neglect, and ſtrengthens me in grace and goodneſs, And if, even in my ſtudied and moſt laboured devotions, I am ſo often cold, ſo lukewarm at the beſt; how frozen ſhould I be, how inſenſible and dead, were theſe helps laid aſide, and no ſuch application uſed to warm and quicken me? Though therefore my life be not ſo perfect, that I am always in a fit diſpoſition to communicate; yet it ſhall be my care, at ſolemn and proper ſeaſons, not to loſe the benefit of theſe holy myſteries, or ever to refuſe my own happineſs. For this is the ſovereign balm of wounded conſciences; the great preſervative of decaying ſouls, the chearing comfort of the faithful, bemoaning their preſent ſtate of baniſhment, and groaning earneſtly for a reaſone from the afflictions and infirmities of thoſe mortal bodies, to which thy providence hath for a time confined them. And the oftener they thus remember their God, the greater is that affliction, and humble devotion, with which they court and embrace their beloved ſpouſe and Lord.

But oh! how amazing is thy love? and what is man whom thou vouchſafeſt to viſit, when the great God, the creater of the world, and father of the ſpirits of all fleſh, diſdains not to deſcend into a poor ſoul, and fill the hungry wretch with this bread of life. Happy that breaſt, which is thus honoured, and unſpeakable the joy, with which it overflows! how glorious a maſter, how agreeable a gueſt, how pleaſant a companion, how faithful a friend, how beautiful, how honourable, how charming a huſband, does it entertain and embrace? Let heaven and earth, and all their boaſted exellencies, keep ſilence before him, for if I have my Jeſus, I have all. For I have him, from whom all other good things derive their excellence; and their borrowed precarious perfections can miniſter no joy, can make no happineſs, without this great original. They in themſelves are nothing, they are but what he made them; and he alone is more, incomparable more and better, than all that ever was, or could be made.

CHAP. IV.

The pleaſures of devout communion.

DISCIPLE.

PRevent me, I moſt humbly beſeech thee, my Lord and my God, with the bleſſings and grace of thy holy ſpirit; that thy ſervant may taſte thy ſweetneſs, and approach this precious feaſt, with ſuch reverence, and zeal, and fervent devotion, as thou wilt be pleaſed to accept. O viſit me with thy ſalvation, and awaken me from ſpiritual ſloth and ſlumber; that I now may vigorouſly apply my ſelf, to draw and drink the living water, contain'd in this fountain open for ſin and for uncleanneſs. Enlighten the eyes of my mind, that I may ſee the wondrous things of this thy inſtitution; and ſtrengthen my faith, that I may firmly and without ſcruple believe and expect thoſe operations, which my reaſon is not able to account for. And why indeed ſhould I make any difficulty to believe, what I cannot comprehend and trace the dark footſteps of; when I remember, that it is not the act of finite feeble man, but the work of an almighty God; not an invention or project of human reaſon, but the inſtitution and promiſe of him, who worketh all things according to the wiſe and wonderful counſel of his own unbounded will? To fathom theſe depths to the bottom were an attempt impracticable, even to the refined underſtanding of an angel. Well then may poor ſhort-ſighted man turn giddy at the ſight of this abyſs, and confeſs the well too deep, and the cordage and plummet too ſhort. Such and no better is the condition of the moſt exalted ſaints;

and what can I, the feebleſt even of men, vile ſinful duſt and aſhes, hope to diſcover, by my moſt induſtrious ſearch into thoſe heavenly myſteries?

Inſtead therefore of nice reaſoning and unprofitable diſputes, I will approach with ſingleneſs of heart, with firm and holy hope, with an undoubting faith, and profound reverence. Whatever the vanity of worldly wiſdom may ſuggeſt to the contrary, I will not queſtion, but thou art preſent in the ſacrament, though I cannot ſatisfy the captious enquiries after the particular manner of that preſence. Thy human and divine nature are inſeparable; thus much I know, and no more but this; that thou art ſo preſent as God, as not to contradict thy being man. 'Tis upon this account, that thou art pleaſed to command my receiving thee, and haſt engaged to make me one with thyſelf, by the ſtricteſt union of a holy love. Shed therefore, I pray thee, thy ſpecial grace into my heart, that I may diſſolve in this holy fire, and become entirely thine. Purge off my droſs, and let me no more endure the allay of any baſer mixtures. For this ſacrament is the pureſt, the nobleſt refiner of ſouls, the health of the whole man, the reſtorative of ſpiritual decays, the cure of vice, the curb of paſſions, the antidote againſt troubles and temptations; the conveyancer of greater grace; the increaſe of imperfect virtue; the ſtay of hope; the ſupport of our faith, and the mighty incentive of our charity.

Who can expreſs the manifold, the aſtoniſhing benefits, which thou frequently imparteſt to thy beloved and religious ſervants, by communicating in this bleſſed ſupper? Even thou, my God, the cheriſher of my ſoul, the repairer of my breaches by infirmity and ſin, and reſtorer of my inward comfort and peace. By this thou ſuſtaineſt them in ſadneſs and affliction, and enableſt them to walk upon the waves of a troubleſome world. By this thou cheereſt their melancholy and diſtruſt, and raiſeſt up their ſinking ſpirits with aſſurance of thy gracious protection and aſſiſtance. By this thou reneweſt their nature, and purifieſt their affections; that they, who came at firſt to this table, with great lothneſs and dulneſs, feel a new warmth within, and by degrees are brought to frequent it with unſpeakable reliſh and delight. Theſe happy and glorious Effects thou produceſt, by ſuch uncommon, unlikely means, that Men may find experimentally their own infirmities; how little they are able to do of themſelves, and how much, when ſtrengthened by thee. That they are cold, inſenſible, ſtupid and dead to all religious duties, is from their own diſpoſition; that they are zealous in good works, cheaful in thy ſervice, devout in thy worſhip, is purely thy gift. And ſure none can come hither with due attention, but he muſt return with ſome improvement. For who can lie at the fountain-head, and not receive ſome tincture from the ſweetneſs of the ſpring? Who can ſtand cloſe to the fire, and feel no hurt? But thou art a fountain ever-full, ever overflowing. Thou art the fire, whoſe flames are conſtantly expanding themſelves, to kindle holy affections in all thoſe, who are careful to approach, and put themſelves in the way of their activity and influence.

It may be I am not worthy to drink at the head of this ſpring, or to take my fill of its refreſhing ſtreams; but yet at leaſt I will apply my mouth to ſome of its diſtant pipes, and ſpreading rills, to catch a few of the drops, as they ſlide by, that I be not utterly barren, nor die with drought and thirſt. I may not be able to approach this flame ſo near, that it ſhould refine and brighten me to a degree equal with the purity of the cherubim and ſeraphim; but yet I will not deſpair of being ſo far cheriſhed and warmed by it, that my zeal may be exalted according to the brightneſs of human virtues: And my enlivened heart ſhall feel ſome glowings, if it do not flame out heavenly clear. Defects and infirmities, I know, I cannot be exempted from: But what is wanting, I beg my merciful Jeſus would ſupply. His kindneſs will not fail to make all equitable Allowances, and his Wiſdom knows where they are proper to be made. Forgiven and made up they may be; and I, as unworthy as I am, may be accepted. But that unworthneſs muſt not be made a pretence for detaining me from this Sacrament. For ſure the moſt unworthy are comprehended, and they who ſee, and lament, that they are ſuch, can leaſt of all be excluded; when he pronounces that general invitation, *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refreſh you.*

The oftner I deſcend into my ſelf, the more I am convinced, that this deſcription exactly ſuits my ſtate. I fulfil the primitive ſentence upon fallen man, and labour in the ſweat of my face, *Gen.* iii. The ſorrows of my heart perplex and diſtract me, the burthens of my ſins ſink me down, the multitude of my temptations are a perpetual torment and vexation, the variety and exorbitance of my corrupt affections entangle and confound, and over-power my reaſon. And in the midſt of theſe calamities and dangers, I have no ſuccour, no defence, no ſupporter oı deliverer, but only thee, my God, and therefore into thy hands, my merciful maker and ſaviour, I commit myſelf, and all my affairs; and pray that thou would'ſt keep what is thus depoſited with thee, ſafe unto life eternal. O take me therefore into thy cuſtody; and, as thou haſt ordained thy body and blood to be the food of immortality; ſo grant, that it may have its proper efficacy upon my ſoul in particular, to the glory of thy name, and the honour of ſo bleſſed an inſtitution. And, that no neglect or unfruitfulneſs of mine may obſtruct its kindly and powerful operations: Grant, I beſeech thee, my God and Saviour, that I never may be guilty of ſuch diſreſpect, as wilfully to turn my back upon thy table; but may earneſtly long for, heartily rejoice in, and diligently comply with, every opportunity of receiving this ineſtimable bleſſing; and may ſo frequent, and ſo improve under thy merciful diſpenſation; that I may conſtantly return, with greater care and zeal, more ſettled reſolutions, more irreconcileable hatred againſt ſin, and more fervent love for God and goodneſs than before. So ſhall I approach nearer to thee indeed, and each ſacrament prove a freſh advance toward heaven. So ſhall my ſoul be filled with the treaſures of thy mercy, the delights of thy ſecret ones, and the raviſhing foretaſtes of that bliſs, wbich ſhall be always growing, till it be conſummated at laſt in that eternal feaſt above, the marriage-ſupper of the lamb in thy kingdom. *Amen.*

CHAP. V.

The dignity of the ſacrament, and honour of the prieſthood.

CHRIST.

IF thou ſeeſt the table richly furniſhed, and art deſirous to feaſt upon theſe dainty meats, let that deſire be duly tempered with reverence and holy fear. For know, that if thou hadſt the purity of an angel, or the mortified piety of *John* the baptiſt, yet even thou could'ſt not deſerve ſo divine a bleſſing, but ought'ſt to acknowledge it a mighty favour and condeſcenſion, that thou art admitted to receive, and taſte, or even to touch this bleſſed ſacrament. That man ſhould conſecrate thoſe elements, and by pronouncing a ſet form of words introduce a new efficacy, and give them a myſtical power, which nature neither did, nor could provide them with before; that the perſons preſent ſhould eat the bread of angels, and be filled with heavenly food, by vertue of ſuch conſecration; theſe are not the effect of any extraordinary merit, in them who ſanctify, or who receive, thoſe creatures of bread and wine, but the pure and ſole effect of mercy and grace. The greatneſs of the myſtery does indeed magnify the prieſtly office; and men ought to pay a more than common reſpect to thoſe perſons, whom God hath honoured with a privilege, not imparted to the very angels themſelves. For they, who are regularly ordained in the church, are the only perſons, by whoſe miniſtry God gives the body of his ſon to us. They are the perſons acting by his commiſſion, they uſe the form appointed by Chriſt himſelf, and have a conſtant and powerful effect attending upon their due adminiſtration. But ſtill our thoughts and wonder muſt not terminate in them, as if by *their own* power and holineſs they could bring ſuch things to paſs. For they are only inſtruments; and therefore we muſt carry our meditations further, up as high as God himſelf, for he is the firſt and principal cauſe, he the inviſible worker of this miracle of mercy. It is his word, which made, and governs all things, that only can command material and common elements to produce ſpiritual and extraordinary effects, and ſtrengthen and refreſh the ſouls of the faithful by the body and blood of Chriſt; at the ſame time, and with as certain operation, as their bodies are ſtrengthened and refreſhed by the bread and wine.

When therefore thou approacheſt the chriſtian altar, reſt not in the teſtimony of thy ſenſes, nor dwell upon the *outward and viſible ſigns*; but let thy faith carry thee on to *the inward and ſpiritual grace*, and exerciſe it ſelf in contemplating the almighty power of God. And thou, to whom the invoking this power and its efficacious preſence is committed, ſee that thou do it with awful reverence and godly Fear: Conſider whoſe ſervant thou art, and what a glorious character thou haſt received by impoſition of the biſhop's hands. For thou art ordained a prieſt for noble and religious purpoſes. The excellence of thy office conſiſts, in giving thy maſter's family their portion of meat, in due manner and ſeaſon. Be faithful therefore in the execution of this weighty truſt; proceed in it with a fervent and exemplary devotion, and let it be thy firſt care, to offer up thy ſelf, an unreprovable ſacrifice to God.

Do not imagine any part of thy privilege to conſiſt in an exemption from the duties incumbent upon common chriſtians. Alas! thy burden is not leſs but greater, thy temptations many; thy danger more eminent, for being thus diſtinguiſhed. For it will be expected, that the ſanctity of thy manners, the ſeverity of thy virtue, the conqueſt of thy paſſions, the perfection of thy holineſs, the ardency and zeal of thy devotion, ſhould diſtinguiſh thee, as viſibly, as eminently, as thy garb and thy profeſſion do. That thou ſhould'ſt be cloath'd and adorn'd with that righteouſneſs, that innocence, that gravity, of which thy robe is a ſignificant embelm; and as thou art become a leader, thou ſhould'ſt likewiſe be a pattern, to the flock. For the converſation of ſuch perſons ſhould be no longer conformable to the cuſtoms and corrupt examples of the world, but conformed to the angels in heaven, or to the ſaints that excel in virtue upon earth.

When thou entreſt into the holy place, and there putteſt on the garments of thy function, conſider what thou art going about, and how high a place thou haſt obtained; no leſs than to be the repreſentative of the great high-prieſt in heaven, and to miniſter in his ſtead unto his people. Firſt, therefore, with all humility, bewail thy unworthineſs, and confeſs thy own ſins. Then with a moſt extenſive charity, and tender compaſſion, bewail, and intercede for the ſins of others. Look upon thy ſelf as a mediator between God and tranſgreſſors; to offer up their prayers, confeſſions and thankſgivings to him; and to tranſmit his pardon and bleſſing to them. And be not ſloathful or unthinking, careleſs or cold in this affair; for it is moſt important, and requires thy moſt diligent attention, thy moſt earneſt importunity, thy moſt indefatigable perſeverance; never to be abated, till thou hath gained thy point, and prevailed for mercy and grace, by thoſe reſolute wreſtlings with God. But, when thou celebrateſt the holy ſupper, remember, thou art about a work, which all heaven and earth are concern'd in. A work, which, when perform'd as it ought, brings honour to God, joy to the bleſſed angels, edification to the church of Chriſt, converſation to ſinners, peace to wounded conſciences, comfort to the afflicted, ſtrength to the feeble, and to thy ſelf abundance of grace, and an exceeding great reward.

CHAP. VI.

An act of preparation before the ſacrament.

DISCIPLE.

BEhold, Lord, with thy accuſtomed mercy, the doubts and confuſions of my troubled breaſt. For, when I look up to heaven, and conſider the majeſty of my great, my holy God; and from thence draw my eyes back upon my ſelf, and view my own vileneſs and horrible ſinfulneſs; I am all perplexity, and diſtraction and horror. Thou biddeſt me come; and if I refuſe or neglect to comply with that gracious invitation, I forſake my own mercy, and deprive my ſelf of life and happineſs. But if I come unworthily, I am equally miſerable; and ſhall be puniſhed for the high indignity, of bringing ſo polluted a gueſt, to ſo pure and heavenly a feaſt. What courſe then ſhall I take to be ſafe, when danger and death threaten on either hand? I will even fly to thee my God; and, inſtead of conſulting with fleſh and blood, or hearkning to the deceitful Inſinuations of my too raſh or too timorous reaſon, will aſk council of thee, my infallible and only oracle in diſtreſſes.

Teach me, I beſeech thee, the right way, and lead me in ſuch methods of holy preparation, as may be proper and ſuitable to ſo exalted an act of religion. I know that theſe approaches to thee, in the bleſſed ſacrament, are exceeding beneficial and delightful; but withal reveal to me in what manner thou muſt be approached, to render that, which is deſirable in it ſelf, ſafe and profitable to me in particular. Give me, I beſeech thee, a due ſenſe of the greatneſs of the myſtery, and the excellence of thy mercy in it; and, conſequent to that, fill my ſoul with pure and holy affections, with earneſt longings, with godly ſorrow, with ſincere and ſtedfaſt reſolutions, with profound reverence and ſincere devotion; that my heart may be a clean, though homely receptacle for my ſaviour, ſuch as he will not diſdain; and I ſo well-diſpoſed a gueſt at this divine feaſt, this ſpiritual ſacrifice, that thou may'ſt bid me welcome to thy table, and the food I receive there may nouriſh me up to health and life eternal. *Amen.*

CHAP. VII.

Of ſelf-examination.

CHRIST.

A*Bove all keepings, keep thy* heart; and, whether prieſt or private chriſtian, take good heed, that, at thy coming to my holy table, thy devotion conſiſt not in bodily worſhip, and pomp and ſhew only. I am not to be impoſed upon with ſuch empty formalities, but require an upright, humble, and devout mind; a mind low and proſtrate as thy body, a ſtedfaſt faith and pure intention, an unfeigned Zeal for God's honour. Therefore, before thou preſumeſt to approach, examine well, how thou art qualified. Search every corner of thy conſcience, and do thy utmoſt to purge and expel all remains of the old leaven. Let no ſin unrepented of reproach thee; no luſt unmortified divide thy affections, and hinder thy free and entire reſignation to my will. Conceive a juſt hatred and indignation againſt all thy ſins in general; and for thoſe, which are either too groſs to be overlooked, or too habitual to be forgotten, expreſs a particular and proportionable reſentment of Sorrow and ſhame. And, if thou have time and leiſure, look well into the irregularities of all thy paſſions, and, in thy private retirements, make a full Confeſſion of them, between God and thy own ſoul.

Recollect and bewail the unhappy prevalence of worldy and carnal affections; every exorbitant Deſire, every ungoverned paſſion. Obſerve, how the motions of evil concupiſcence abound and domineer; how unguarded thou art in thy outward behaviour, and the general courſe of thy converſatian; how eaſily thou art ſeduced by vanity; how vehemently diſpoſed to the gratifications of appetite and ſenſe; how careleſs and ſtupid in the weightier concerns of thy ſoul; how apt to let thyſelf looſe to laughter and extravagant mirth, and how exceedingly unwilling to mourn for thy ſins with a true, ſaving, and neceſſary contrition; how earneſtly thou purſueſt the pleaſures and advantages of the body, and how dull and ſlothful thou art in the exerciſes of mortification and godly zeal; how mighty curious and inquiſitive after news and trifles, and greedy to be entertained with every pomp and beauty that can pleaſe thy ſight; but, how negligent and backward, how full of diſregard and diſdain, to things of leſs gay appearance, but of true inward worth, and efficacious conſequence to thy better ſtate; how greedy of gain; how ſparing in thy alms; how tenacious of this world's goods; how inconſiderate in thy diſcourſe, how childiſh and trifling, how wicked or obſcene; how laviſh and profuſe; and what a torment it is to *ſet a guard before thy mouth, and keep the door of thy lips*, Pſal. cxli. How affected or extravagant in thy behaviour, how raſh and eager in thy actions, how inordinate in thy appetites; but how ſlow and deaf to the word of God; how negligent in hearing, and how inflexible to be perſuaded by what thou haſt heard; how prone to reſt and eaſe, and how averſe to labour and neceſſary care; how wakeful and attentive at plays, or balls, and how drowſy and lifeleſs in prayer and holy duties; how impatient till they are done; and how full of wandering and impertinent thoughts, while they are in doing; how eaſily diverted from thy ſtated hours of devotion; how lukewarm in receiving the bleſſed ſacrament, how unfixed in thy mind at the very time of communicating, and how barren and unprofitable afterwards; how ſoon excited to anger upon every ſlight miſcarriage, and yet how apt to give offence to others; how prone to judge, and ſeverely cenſure thy brethren; how ſtiff and poſitive in thoſe judgments and hard conſtructions; how inſolent and immoderately exalted with good fortune, and how feeble and dejected under every croſs or diſappointment; how full of good intentions, and how few of them executed to thy eternal advantage, as they ought to be.

Theſe, and many other defects, of which each man's own conſcience can beſt inform him, it is thy duty to inquire into very impartially; to bewail ſeriouſly, to confeſs with the profoundeſt humility, and with firm purpoſe of amendment for the time to come. When this is done, then, without any ſecret reſerve to thy own inclinations, reſign thyſelf up entirely to God, to be governed by him, and offer to the glory of his name, *thy ſoul and body, a holy, living and reaſonable ſacrifice.* Thus ſhalt thou come to me worthily, and receive my myſtical body to thy infinite advantage.

For there is no other ſatisfaction in man's power to make for his great offences, and manifold provocations againſt the majeſty on high; no oblation more acceptable than that of a *broken and contrite,* a pure and upright heart, offered to God in this ſacrament. He deſires nothing but thy ſelf, and he deſires this, not for his own, but for thy ſake. He who brings it, let him not doubt acceptance; for God never rejects a true penitent, but embraces returning prodigals, with the tenderneſs of a father; and grants them pardon for the time paſt, and grace for the future. His word, his oath is paſſed. And he who cannot lie may ſecurely be depended upon. *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the death of a ſinner, but rather that he ſhould be converted and live,* Ezek. xviii. And *at what time ſoever the wicked man turneth away from his wickedneſs which he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſave his ſoul alive; Repent therefore, and turn your ſelves from all your tranſgreſſions, and ſo iniquity ſhall not be your ruin. For*

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I will be merciful to your unrighteouſneſs, and your ſins and iniquities will I remember no more, Heb. viii.

CHAP. VIII.

Chriſt died for us, that we ſhould live to him.

CHRIST.

BEhold and take example by me. I hung upon the croſs with a naked body, and ſtretch'd-out arms, and thus offered myſelf to my father for thy ſin. No part of me remained, which was not given in atonement, to appeaſe the wrath of thy juſtly incenſed judge. And thou in like manner muſt think it thy duty, freely and wholly to give up thy ſelf, a clean and holy ſacrifice. Every power, every affection, of thy ſoul muſt be for ever conſecrated to me, in the bleſſed ſacrament. What doth the Lord require of thee, but to conſult thy own intereſt, and ſave thyſelf, by conveying over thyſelf to me? Whatever elſe thou dedicateſt to my ſervice, is of no value, no conſideration with me; for I ſeek not thine, but thee.

As all the world beſides would fail of procuring thy happineſs and ſatisfaction if deprived of me; ſo all thy riches and gifts ſet apart for my uſe, can never be well-pleaſing in my ſight, unleſs with them thou giveſt thy own ſelf. My whole perſon was ſacrificed for thy redemption; either of my natures ſingle had been inſufficient to propitiate for thy ſins; my whole body and blood is ſet upon my table for thy entertainment; and what can be the meaning of all this, but that I ſhould be entirely thine, and thou entirely mine? But if thou art not ſincere in this oblation, if it be made with any reſerves and exceptions;

tions; the offering is not perfect, the ſacrifice is maimed, defective in its parts; and the union, which ſhould follow upon it, muſt be proportionably lame and imperfect. The firſt thing therefore to be taken care of, is the liberal and full reſignation of thy perſon. This muſt recommend and ſanctify all thy other acts of religion; and, till thou art releaſed from the bondage of divided affections, thou canſt not attain grace and true liberty. Hence it is, and upon no other account, that, of ſo many profeſſors, and ſeemingly good chriſtians, ſo very few ſtand faſt in the liberty with which Chriſt hath made them free. The condition is fixed and irreverſible, *If a man forſake not all that he hath, he cannot be my diſciple*, Luke xiv. And therefore, if thou deſireſt to be found in this happy number, enter my courts with a free-will offering, and conſecrate every inclination, every faculty of thy ſoul. Have no love, no deſires, but mine. *Submit thy ſelf wholly to my holy will and pleaſure, and ſtudy to ſerve me truly in holineſs and righteouſneſs all thy days, in all the actions, of thy life.*

CHAP. IX.

An act of ſelf-reſignation.

DISCIPLE.

IT *is very meet, right, and my bounden duty*, that I ſhould at all times do as thou requireſt: For this, O Lord, is but to give thee of thy own. Heaven and earth are thine, and all that therein is. I deſire with ſingleneſs of heart, to dedicate my ſelf to thee, never to retract the gift, but continue thine for ever. Accept me therefore entirely devoted to thy ſervice from this day forward, a ſacrifice of praiſe and perpetual thankſgiving. I call thoſe bleſſed ſpirits to witneſs, who, tho' inviſible to human eyes, conſtantly aſſiſt at our ſolemn acts of religious worſhip: Humbly beſeeching thee, that the oblation of thy dear ſon's bleſſed body, repreſented in this ſacrament, may be effectual for the ſalvation of me, and of all thy faithful people.

I offer to thee, Lord, my manifold ſins and tranſgreſſions, my corrupt inclinations and vicious habits, which from my youth up until now, have ſo grievouſly provoked thy wrath and juſt indignation, to be a whole burnt-ſacrifice. Slay them O Lord, before thy altar, and conſume them in the fire of thy love that not any the leaſt ſpot of guilt may remain behind. Purify my conſcience from their ſtain, and wipe out their very remembrance. Reſtore to me thy grace, which my ſins and wilful neglects have ſo often forfeited. Give *me the comfort of thy help again, and eſtabliſh me with thy free, thy* renewing *ſpirit*, Pſal. li. and, having ſealed a full pardon for what is paſt, receive me to thy fatherly embraces, and aſſure me of thy affection, by a kiſs of peace and reconciliation.

What ſatisfaction can I make for my manifold injuries and bold affronts to thy righteous laws, but that alone of humble confeſſion, profound ſorrow, and hearty prayers, for thy acceptance of thy ſon's atonement? I do moſt heartily bewail and deteſt all my wickedneſſes, and by thy grace will never be guilty of the like any more. I do, and will to the laſt minute of my life grieve for theſe provocations; and am deſirous, by my future carriage, to teſtify the truth of my repentance, and make the beſt reparation I am able, for the ſcandal I have formerly given. O Lord, pardon me; O Lord, forgive me; defer not for thy own ſake, O my God; but let thy mercy be glorified in preſerving the ſoul of thy ſervant, whom thou haſt redeemed with thy moſt precious blood. Behold I commit my ſelf wholly to thy mercy, and commend and depoſite my ſpirit into thy hands. O deal with me according to thy great goodneſs, and not after my ſins and heinous offences.

To thee I humbly offer all in me that is goon. A very poor worthleſs and imperfect offering, I with ſhame confeſs it: but worthleſs as it is, I beg thou wilt accept it. Supply my defects, ſanctify and exalt what is debaſed with infirmity or impure mixtures; diſdain not my ſincere, tho'. weak, endeavours; enable me daily to do better; and raiſe at laſt this ſlothful, unprofitable creature, to ſuch degrees of virtue and ſuccesful activity, as may, by the more diligent uſe of thy grace, end in a bleſs'd and glorious eternity.

I alſo dedicate to thee the prayers and good wiſhes of all that have interceded for me, or deſired my interceſſions for them: The neceſſities and diſtreſſes for my friends and relations, and all that have done good to me, or others, for thy ſake; imploring, that thou would'ſt aſſiſt them by thy grace, comfort them in their afflictions, protect them in all dangers, deliver them from puniſhment and death eternal; and ſo reſcue them from evil, that they may magnify thy good providence, and with thankful hearts rejoice in thy mercy.

In a more particular manner, accept, I beſeech thee, my moſt hearty prayers, and peace offerings, for all, who have injured me in word, thought or deed, created me any diſturbance by ill treatment, ſlander'd or reviled me with ill language, or given me any manner of uneaſineſs, or angry reſentment. And likewiſe, for all, whom I have injured, grieved, or offended, by word, thought or deed, knowingly or ignorantly, with, or without deſign: Intreating thy forgiveneſs for all that hath been done, or taken amiſs on either ſide. Take away, thou who lovedſt and diedſt for thy enemies, all rancour and malice, all animoſities and revengeful thoughts, all paſſionate remembrances and diſpoſitions to ſtrife and debate, all that may be inconſiſtent with true charity, or tend to the decay of brotherly love. Have mercy, Lord, on all, who ſue for mercy; ſupply the needs of all that want; and grant us all ſuch meaſures of thy grace, and ſo firm perſeverance in it; that we may grow up to ſuch degrees, as this mortal ſtate is capable of here, and may receive our perfect conſummation and bliſs, both in body and ſoul, in thy eternal and everlaſting kingdom. *Amen.*

CHAP. X.

The ſin and miſchief of abſenting from the Lord's-ſupper.

CHRIST.

IT is by no means ſufficient, that men do once, or very rarely, repair to this holy ſacrament; but, as their occaſions and neceſſities are frequent, ſo ſhould their care in ſeeking ſupplies be. The paſſions of the ſoul are daily in commotion, and its diſeaſes and evil habits get ground by their malignant ſpreading quality. The temptations of the devil are ſeldom intermitted; or, if they be, 'tis only out of wicked ſubtilty, that even thoſe intervals of quiet may contribute the more effectually to mens ruin. And if this be, as moſt aſſuredly it is, thy caſe, think then, how urgent thy wants are, and how frequent thy returns ought to be to this fountain of divine grace. That here thou may'ſt drink living water, and quench the raging maladies of thy ſoul; that here thou may'ſt receive balm into thy wounds, and apply proper remedies to thy ſeveral indiſpoſitions; that thou may'ſt grow more wiſe and wary by ſuch recollections, more clearly underſtand thy own ſtate, by thoſe examinations, which prepare thee for my table; and by frequently and devoutly attending this holy inſtitution, be ſtrengthned againſt the aſſaults of the enemy, and more upon thy guard againſt his ſubtle inſinuations. And one of his inſinuations it certainly is, to hinder and draw men off from communicating often; as being very ſenſible how great and happy advantages they reap by ſo doing; and, that this is the very beſt courſe they can poſſibly take of ſecuring themſelves, and defeating his malicious endeavours to debauch and ruin their ſouls.

For this reaſon men are not to think it ſtrange, if they find the devil then more eſpecially buſy, when they ſet themſelves, with more than common earneſtneſs, to the preparation for, or the exerciſe of, the moſt ſolemn and exalted acts of religion. For this wicked ſpirit, as the hiſtory of *Job* intimates, is always induſtrious to mingle himſelf with the ſons of God, when they appear before their heavenly father, *Job* i. He contrives then to give them great diſturbance, to damp their joys, and break their holy purpoſes, by ſuggeſting many fears, and diſtracting their minds with unneceſſary ſcruples. He terrifies them with *eating and drinking their own damnation*, and keeps them back by miſtaken notions of their unworthineſs and danger. If he can either thus prevail, for a total neglect of this ſacrament, or contrive, that they ſhall come full of doubt, and diſſatisfaction, he gains his point. But be not ignorant of his devices; inform thy ſelf rightly of thy duty, and wherein unworthineſs does truly conſiſt; that nothing but want of ſincerity and true reverence, can bring thee into hazard; and then deſpiſe his vain attempts to diſcompoſe and fruſtrate thy good intentions. Retort his wicked craft back upon his own head, by being more vigilant, more careful, more reſolved; but by no means omit this duty, nor ſuffer thy ſelf to be drawn off from that communion, which is the ſovereign antidote, and the beſt preſervative, againſt ſin and temptation.

If he labours to diſguiſe his deviliſh arts, under the ſpacious colour of caution, and humility, and want of more perfect devotion; lay aſide thy unprofitable and diſquieting anxieties, and flee for ſuccour and advice to ſome godly paſtor. Let his prudence direct thy doubting ſteps, and unboſom thy ſelf freely to him; that, by confeſſing thy ſins, and opening thy caſe to the phyſician of ſouls, thou may'ſt receive the benefit of ghoſtly counſel, and the comfort of abſolution. Know, that no ſin can hurt thee, or render thee an unworthy receiver, when once confeſs'd, and ſeriouſly repented of: And that, when this is done, all thy doubts and perplexities but hinder the grace of God, and check thy improvement in piety and true devotion. Let not any ordinary trouble or affliction deter thee from coming to thy Lord for relief; but make the greater haſte to reconcile thy ſelf to God, and purge away thoſe offences, which may have provoked, and drawn down, the affliction upon thee. Let not any difference between thee and thy brethren detain thee; for there is a ſhort and ready way of removing this obſtacle, by forgiving and praying for thoſe who have grieved or injured thee; and by reconciling thy ſelf, and aſking pardon of thoſe, whom thou haſt offended. And, if they ſtill be ſo perverſe, as not to be reconciled upon a due ſubmiſſion; yet conſider, their obſtinacy and wickedneſs ought not to be an obſtruction to the performance of thy duty. Thou haſt done thy part, and God will be ſure to forgive, and accept thy perſon, though men do not.

What benefit can a man poſſibly propoſe to himſelf from the putting off examination and repentance, and forbearing to come to the holy communion? Moſt certainly, when one is diſeaſed, the greateſt wiſdom is to be reſtored to health again as ſoon as poſſibly he can; to expel the malignity, and diſcharge the venom immediately. Thus will the cure be eaſier, more ſpeedy, more ſucceſsful. For every delay adds to the diſtemper, and gathers freſh and more obſtinate matter. If you omit the preſent opportunity upon one pretence, another and more prevailing may interpoſe, and deprive you of the next. And thus by degrees you will be wrought upon to excuſe yourſelf again and again, and by longer abſtinence become leſs fit, as well as leſs willing, to return to your duty. Whatever burthen then you find upon your mind, get quit of it betimes; do not indulge your ſloth and backwardneſs a moment;

for there never can come any good of prolonging your cares and troubles, and making the common hindrances of worldly buſineſs, a reaſon for neglecting your great, your eternal intereſt. This is moſt manifeſt, and experience will prove the truth of it when it is too late; that, the longer you defer communicating, the leſs you will find your ſelf diſpoſed to it; and a ſtrange careleſneſs and diſregard for holy exerciſes will inſenſibly creep upon your mind, and get a prevailing maſtery. But, which is a moſt lamentable thing to conſider, many looſe and diſſolute, nay, many thoughtleſs and lukewarm people, indulge themſelves in this indifference; and induſtriouſly ſeek pretences to defer their repentance and approaches to the Lord's table, meerly to avoid, as they think, the neceſſity of parting with their darling luſts, and the keeping that ſtrict guard upon their converſation, without which they muſt be loſt to all eternity.

How cold, alas! is thoſe mens love for me? How feeble their devotion, who, upon ſuch frivolous pretences, can diſpence with this ſo neceſſary duty, ſo glorious privilege, of communicating at thy table? How happy how eaſy to himſelf, how acceptable, how dear to God, is that man, whoſe conduct is ſo ſtrictly virtuous, whoſe conſcience is ſo void of ſtain and reproach, that he could every day moſt chearfully, moſt ſafely, partake of this heavenly feaſt, were the opportunities of doing it equal to his diſpoſition, and could his zeal eſcape the cenſure of needleſs oſtentation? For a man is not preſently to be condemned, who does not ſeek, or embrace, every poſſible occaſion of communicating. There may be ſome very allowable, and others even commendable, reaſons, for abſenting. If out of deep humility, and awful reverence, or as a voluntary puniſhment inflicted upon a man's ſelf for ſome grievous relapſe, he impoſes this penance, or dreads to come: The reſpect paid to the ordinance, or the holy indignation conceived againſt himſelf, may be better accepted, and more becoming than receiving it in ſuch circumſtances. But this muſt be ſo far indulged, that long diſuſe ſhould produce indifference and diſregard for the ſacrament. For, if once the ſoul degenerate into neglect and ſpiritual ſloth, all poſſible endeavours muſt be uſed to awaken it. Not doubting, but that God will be ever preſent with the aſſiſtance of his grace, and ſecond thy care with ſucceſs, proportionable to thy endeavours and diligence, and the ſincerity of thy good intentions.

But one thing muſt always be obſerv'd, that when the hindrances to communicating are real, and important, and neceſſary; not frivolous excuſes induſtriouſly ſought, or readily laid hold on, to cover impiety and negligence; the perſon ſo detain'd is preſent in wiſh and inclination, though not in actual attendance. And then the benefit of the ſacrament, and all the ſaving effects of it, are as fully imparted to him, as his appearance in the congregation, and the elements themſelves could have inſured them. For 'tis a great miſtake to imagine, that good men receive not the advantages of Chriſt's body and blood, except juſt then, when they receive the outward and viſible ſigns of them. Every day, every hour furniſhes opportunities of ſpiritual communion; and a man thus compoſed can never be ſurprized, never find any difficulty to comply with any occaſion of doing it publickly. For an innocent life, and a devout mind, are a conſtant preparation. But when, the uſual ſeaſons return, and eſpecially the ſolemn feſtivals, wherein the great and glorious myſteries of the chriſtian Religon are commemorated; then ſuch a one will think it his duty to join with the publick aſſemblies, in this ſublimeſt inſtance of Piety and Thankſgiving; he will approach with a, heart full of affection and reverence; and eſteem this homage due, not only to himſelf for the comforts and advantages he may expect from it, but more eſpecially to me, for the honour and tribute of praiſe, by which my name and mercies ought to be thus magnified among men. And this is a fruit, which can only redound to me by open and viſible acts of worſhip. Whereas the other of private improvement and myſtical communion with Chriſt, is attained in ſecret, and conſtantly follows upon every religious meditation concerning my incarnation, and ſufferings, or any other of the myſterious works, by which the redemption of mankind was compleated, and the pious Affections of chriſtians are cheriſhed and inflamed.

They, who reſerve themſelves for the feaſts of the Church only, totally neglecting other opportunities, and take no care to put their ſouls in a due poſture for receiving, except only when ſuch ſolemnities call them to it, are ſeldom or never prepared as they ought to be. He is the ſafe, the happy man, who makes it his frequent practice, and conſtantly offers up himſelf a ſacrifice to his God. In the act of communicating keep rule and order, and let not thy haſte or impatience, the length of thy private devotions, or any other ſingularity of thy own fancy, give diſturbance to the common uſages and ceremonies of the congregation, whereof thou art a member. For take this along with thee, that, even in this part of worſhip, where zeal and devotion are moſt acceptable ingredients, yet theſe very qualifications, when indulged out of ſeaſon and meaſure, loſe all their value; and are not half ſo pleaſing in the ſight of God, as unaffected modeſty, and an humble decent compliance with the eſtabliſh'd orders and cuſtoms of the church, and the convenience of others; who ought not to be diſturbed, or incommoded, for the fantaſtical or peculiar ways of any private perſon whatſoever.

CHAP. XI.

The benefit of Chriſt's body and blood.

DISCIPLE.

O Sweeteſt, deareſt Jeſus! Who can expreſs the charms, and extaſies, of that ſoul, which feaſts with thee at thy table; that table, where no common food is placed, but the divine entertainment of thy own body and blood? An entertainment delicious, above all that man can expreſs or imagine! What ſatisfaction ſhould we take to come into thy tabernacle, and fall low on our knees before thy footſtool, to open wide our hearts for the delights of thy houſe, and, with *Mary Magdalen*, to waſh thy holy feet with tears of love? But where, alas! Is thy devotion to be found? Where are thoſe eyes overflowing with pious ſorrow? Or, if that ſorrow be ſwallowed up in joy, yet ought we not even thus to approach thee with dry eyes, but tears of joy ſhould trickle down apace, when we conſider our mighty privilege, and the happineſs of being admitted to thy bleſſed preſence, and made partakers of the bliſs of angels. For, as they really behold thy face in glory, ſo am I ſure to ſee, and to receive thee, in the myſtick elements; tho' covered there under a different form, and ſhrouded in a veil of bread and wine.

I adore thy goodneſs, which thus condeſcends to the infirmities of human nature, and in abundant compaſſion is pleaſed, under theſe ſenſible repreſentations, to hide that glorious majeſty, whoſe native luſtre is too piercing and bright, for me, or any created being, to behold in its full luſtre. But tho' my eyes ſee thee not as thou art; yet here, I know I enjoy moſt effectually: And do therefore moſt humbly adore that divinity on earth, which angels proſtrate themſelves before in heaven. I do it through a glaſs, and I gaze with the eyes of faith; they are permitted to do it *face to face, and to know even as they are known.* 1 Cor. xiii. And tho' this glaſs be dark and dim, yet it is ſuch as I ought to be content with, ſince mortality admits of nothing better; nor can I attain any higher perfection, till the day of everlaſting life dawn, and the thick ſhadows of figures are ſcattered by its brightneſs. When that which is perfect ſhall come, then will all uſe for ſacraments be ſuperſeded, and for ever ceaſe. For theſe are remedies and expedients, accommodated to a ſtate of frailty and imperfection, ſuch as the bleſſed above have no occaſion for. They are in endleſs beams of thy glorious preſence. They ſee thee as thou art, and are transformed into the execellencies they ſee. 1 *John* iii. They taſte the word made fleſh, not in the ſymbols of his human nature, but in the native charms of his divine eſſence; as he was the word of God from all eternity, and ſhall continue ſo to be for ever.

When theſe ideas, ſo full of wonder, employ my thoughts, I not only feel a generous diſdain of worldly comforts, but am provoked to diſeſteem even thoſe ſpiritual and better conſolations, which thy grace at preſent diffuſes through my ſoul. And all beſides ſeem poor and deſpicable, ſo long as I am debarred the ſight of my love and my Lord. Thou knoweſt the ſecrets of my heart, and wilt bear teſtimony to the ſincerity of thoſe profeſſions I make; when I declare, that nothing leſs than God, whom I moſt earneſtly long for ever to contemplate, can ſatisfy and fill the impatient deſires of my enlarged ſoul. But this, I know, is a bleſſing, not to be obtained by mortal man, and therefore I will with patience wait the time appointed for it. Thus did thy ſaints of old, who now partake of the joys and kingdom of their Lord. Their faith was vigorous, and their perſeverance unſhaken, their thirſtings eager, but their patience exemplary and humble; till that coming of their Lord, which they thought long; at laſt releaſed, and exalted them. My hope, my faith, are now the ſame, which theirs were then; and, I truſt, my joy and crown, ſhall by thy grace and mercy, be one day the ſame too. Till thy day come, I will tread in their ſteps and ſupport my ſelf by the contemplation of their illuſtrious examples. Thy holy ſcriptures ſhall be my comfort: In them, as in a glaſs, I will view and adorn my ſoul: And above all, thy bleſſed body and blood ſhall be my ſpiritual ſuſtenance. Here will I ſeek for ſtrength againſt infirmities, here apply balm to my wounds, and phyſick to my diſeaſes, and hither fly for refuge, in all my fears, and dangers, and temptations.

Two things are plainly neceſſary to the preſervation of life, without which no miſery could be ſo inſupportable, as that of living here. The diſmal confinement of this priſon of fleſh can only be endured by the help of food and light. Thy mercy hath not left us deſtitute of theſe proviſions; but kindly given thy holy body for my refreſhment and ſuſtenance, and thy holy word *a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.* Pſal. cxix. To theſe I owe, not my comfort only, but even my life it ſelf. For the word of god is the light of the ſoul, and the ſacrament of his death is the bread of life. Theſe are the two tables of the chriſtian, reſembling thoſe of the *jewiſh* church heretofore; where the divine treaſures are exhibited and preſerved. The one, like that of the ſhew-bread, furniſhed moſt richly with the ſymbols of thy precious body; *Heb.* IX. The other, like the repoſitory of the law, containing holy doctrines, preſcribing true and ſaving faith, and leading us within the veil to the moſt holy place.

All honour, and praiſe, and thankſgiving, be to the bleſſed Jeſus, light of eternal uncreated light, for the table of his heavenly doctrine, ſpread and adorned by the miniſtry of his inſpired ſervants, the prophets, apoſtles, and other holy writers, taught by himſelf, that they might teach us. All glory and thanks be to the great creator and merciful redeemer of mankind, for his extenſive tender love, in preparing a plenteous feaſt for all the world. Not like that Paſchal lamb of old, a Type and ſhadow only, but the very ſubſtance of that ſhadow, the acompliſhment of that type; even *Chriſt our paſſover ſacrificed for us*, and offered to us. This bread ſuſtains, this cup chears and rejoices the hearts of the faithful. It fills them with the overflowing delights of paradiſe,

diſe, is a Pledge and foretaſte of heaven, and allowing for the difference of condition, admits us into partnerſhip with angels themſelves. The joy of both is the ſame, tho' both cannot receive it in equal proportions.

How high and honourable is that function, to which God hath permitted, nay enjoined, to miniſter in theſe holy things; to handle and deliver this bleſſed bread, and give each ſervant his portion of life by and with it, to implore with wonderful efficacy the divine bleſſing, and exalt natural and common things, to purpoſes and effects infinitely exceeding all the powers of nature? How clean ſhould thoſe hands, how pure thoſe lips, how chaſt and holy that body be, which ſo frequently, ſo familiarly converſe with, and are united to, the author and perfection of all purity? Sure nothing of corrupt communication, nothing indecent, nothing idle or trifling, nothing but what may tend to edifying, ought to come out of that mouth, which ſo often bleſſes, and conſecrates, and takes into it, the ſacrament of his dying redeemer. How ſhould thoſe eyes be turned away from vanity, how immovably fixed upon heavenly objects, which ſee their Lord's myſtical body, and invite his peculiar preſence, ſo frequently brought upon the altar, by virtue of their being lifted up to the throne of grace, in benedictions and prayers of his own inſtituting?

To men of this profeſſion under the law, no doubt that precept was in a more peculiar manner intended, *Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy,* Levit. xix. But ſure the ſanctity and exemplary lives of prieſts under the goſpel ought to be as much more excellent than thoſe of the ſons of *Aaron,* as our miniſtration exceeds theirs in glory. And therefore, grant thy grace, O bleſſed God, to all who are admitted to this holy office! And thou, who alone workeſt great marvels, exert thy almighty power, in enabling every ſuch perſon to ſerve at thine altar, with clean hands, and a pure heart, with a becoming zeal, and moving devotion; ſuch as may not only ſuit their own character, but be a pattern and powerful incitement to the piety of others. And if we cannot, (as indeed we are ſtill but men, and in many things offend all) if we cannot ſtand before thee in pure unblemiſhed innocence, or come not up to all thoſe eminent degrees of perfection, which we might and ought: Yet let at leaſt our deep and godly ſorrow, by the efficacy of thy merits, expiate our offences; and our reſolutions of entire reformation, and more conſpicuous piety and devotion for the time to come, our unfeigned humility and charity unconfined, and labours indefatigable, make ſuch reparation, as thou wilt pleaſe to accept, for the miſcarriages occaſioned by the fraud and malice of the devil, or by our own carnal will and debility.

CHAP. XII.

Of preparation to the communion.

CHRIST.

I Love holineſs, and I give what I love. A pure heart is the thing I delight in, and this is the place of my reſt. Furniſh me thy largeſt room, and I will come and eat the Paſſover at thy houſe with my diſciples, *Luke* xxii. Purge out the old leaven, and adorn with piety every corner of thy heart; ſweep it clean from the world, and all its filth of thy ſins; if thou deſireſt that I ſhould come and make my abode with thee. Sit as a ſparrow alone upon the houſe-top, and mourn in thy cloſet for all the tranſgreſſions wherein thou haſt exceeded; ſo will I be with thee, and comfort thee, in the bitterneſs of thy ſoul. Thy careful preparation will be the natural conſequence of thy ſincerity and reſpect for me. For every lover provides his beſt appartment to entertain his friend, and beſt beloved; and, by his diligence to receive ſo deſired a gueſt, expreſſes the truth as well as the greatneſs of his affection.

But know withal, when thou haſt done thy utmoſt, that even whole years, beſtowed in preparation, cannot effect what in ſtrict juſtice is due to me. That thou art admitted to my table, and received kindly there, is owing, after all, not to thy own deſert, but to my grace and mercy, which accepts thy weak endeavours, and paſſes by thy ſin and unworthineſs. If beggars, with their nakedneſs and ſores, have leave to ſit and feaſt with princes; their duty is, with humility and thankfulneſs, to acknowledge the uncommon favour. Do then thy part, and do it in the beſt manner thou canſt; do it diligently and heartily; come not as by compulſion, but come willingly and gladly; come not for faſhion's ſake, but come with reverence, and godly fear, and fervent zeal. When thy Saviour condeſcends to come to thee, refuſe him not, nor turn thy back and abſent from his table. I have invited, I have commanded thee to come; let not thy infirmities diſcourage thee, for they are all perfectly known to me; and I will conſider and allow for them, and what is wanting in nature ſhall be ſupplied by grace.

When thou feeleſt thy heart burn with love and devotion, return thy thanks to God for kindling theſe holy fires. I did it, not becauſe thou art worthy of ſuch grace, but becauſe I had compaſſion on thy weakneſs and thy wants. When thou findeſt thy ſelf cold and inſenſible in religious duties, double thy diligence and thy prayers, lament thy deadneſs, and continue knocking, *Matth.* vii. and xv. For if thou perſevere, and wilt take no denial, thou ſhalt not aſk in vain, but be fed, at leaſt with the crumbs that fall from thy maſter's table. Thou ſtandeſt in need of me, but I have none of thee. It is for thy benefit, not my own, that I vouchſafe to meet thee at this ſacrament. Thou comeſt hither to be filled, and ſtrengthened, and ſanctified, to return better than thou cameſt, to receive increaſe of grace, to be one with me, and dwell in me; and thoſe, who come ſincerely diſpoſed to receive me, and amend their life, I will in no wiſe ſend empty away. Do not then neglect thoſe gracious opportunities; do not abſent, or come careleſly; but make me room in thy heart, and let it be a clean and fit reception for ſo pure a gueſt, and he whom thou loveſt, will go home with thee to thy houſe and abide there.

But then obſerve, that there is the ſame neceſſity of care and watch *after* this ſacrament, as of prayer and preparation *before* it. For a conſtant virtuous life, and ſtrict guard over a man's ſelf, are beſt and moſt effectual preparation to every ſacrament, and the ſureſt means of obtaining more and greater degrees of grace. A man, who preſently returns to the world, and gives himſelf a looſe to the liberties and affections, the buſineſs and the pleaſures of it, undoes what he hath taken pains to do before; and defeats the good effects of his moſt ſolemn preparation. Be not fond of variety of company and diverſions; nor laviſh and unwary in thy diſcourſe; but rather chuſe to retire into thy chamber, and converſe much with God in ſolitude and ſilence. When thou haſt him, thou haſt a treaſure which nothing can deprive thee of. I am worthy of thee all, and I expect thee all. Divide not thy ſelf between me and the world, but let me be thy love, thy joy, thy deſire. *So ſhall thy life be hid with Chriſt in God*, Coloſ. iii. And, tho' thou can'ſt not live in thy ſelf, yet thou ſhalt live in me; full of tranquility and peace, far above the diſorderly paſſions, and corroding cares, of ſenſual and earthly-minded men.

CHAP. XIII.

The ſouls deſire of union with Chriſt.

DISCIPLE.

I Hear thy gracious words, my deareſt Lord, and readily and ardently believe the inexpreſſible happineſs of them, whoſe ſouls thy heavenly preſence fills. But how, O! how ſhall I attain that bliſs? How ſhall I ſeek and find my God alone? How open my heart to entertain thee, ſo as to exclude all other gueſts from intruding? O! that no man, no creature, might from henceforth find place in my affections and deſires, ſo as to interrupt my converſation with thee! When ſhall I break looſe from company and care, and enjoy and talk with thee alone, in language free and kind, as that of deareſt friends; and ſoft and tender, ſweet and moving, as the unreſerved retirements and endearing whiſpers of the moſt paſſionate lovers? This is my earneſt wiſh, this my conſtant prayer, that my heart may be knit entirely to thee; and weaned from every earthly and ſenſual delight, and invariably induced to taſte heavenly and eternal joys, by frequent returns to thy holy communion. Ah when, my god, ſhall I be wholly thine, regardleſs of my ſelf, ſwallowed up quite in a bliſsful indiſſoluble union with chriſt? *Thou Lord in me, and I in thee*; John xvii. and thus may we continue united for ever!

Thou verily art my beloved, my choſen, the chiefeſt among ten thouſand, the friend of my boſom, with whom I deſire to dwell all the days of my life. Thou art my peace, and only comfort; with out thee I find nothing but labour and ſorrow, vexation, and Torment, and miſery inſupportable. Thou art a *God, that hideſt thy ſelf*; not dealing thy bleſſings promiſcuouſly, but with wiſe and juſt diſtinction, ſatisfying the humble and meek with the pleaſures of thy word, while thou concealeſt thy councel from the wicked, and leaveſt them to groan and howl, in the anguiſh and horror of their guilty ſouls! O how great is thy bounty! how ſweet thy mercy! who refreſheſt thy hungry ſervants with the delicious bread, which came down from heaven; that thy faithful may eat thereof and not die. *John* vi. Surely there is no nation under heaven, which hath God ſo near to them, as the Lord our God is unto us, in all that we call upon him for, *Deut*. iv. For he *healeth the broken in heart, he hath reſpect unto the lowly*; he *lifteth the ſimple out of the duſt, and raiſeth the needy from the dunghil, to ſet them with princes*, Pſalm cxlvii, cxxxviii, cxiii. to equal them with angels; nay, to give them his fleſh for the ſatisfying their hunger, and, when they are thirſty, the wine of his blood to drink.

What ſociety of men can boaſt of privileges, worthy to be named with thoſe of the chriſtian church? What creature is there upon earth, whoſe excellence and happineſs is comparable to that of the pious and devout ſoul, where god takes up his reſidence, and ſuſtains the heart that entertains him, with his own glorious body? O grace unſpeakable! O condeſcenſion moſt adorable! O love unmeaſurable! Lord what is man, that thou ſhould'ſt thus viſit him? Or what can he render unto his God for theſe ineſtimable benefits? Alas! I have no return to make, but a poor worthleſs heart. And this is yet a farther inſtance of thy goodneſs, that thou expecteſt no other teſtimony of gratitude, but my ſelf, and my ſincere affection. Thus has thou made our duty our greateſt happineſs: For then ſhall my ſoul be glad, and all that is within me exult with joy, when my heart is perfectly united to my god. Then ſhall thou ſay, *if thou wilt be mine, I will live and dwell with thee for ever:* And I with joy and humility reply, *diſdain not Lord, this mean and homely dwelling, for I moſt willingly, moſt thankfully embrace the offer. Lo I am thine intirely from this moment, and, above all things, wiſh, and pray, that the intimacy and friendſhip thus contracted, may continue firm and unviolable, that nothing may abate our love and the delights of it, or ever ſeperate our perſons any more.*

CHAP. XIV.

An act of exciting devotion by the example of others.

DISCIPLE.

O *How plentiful is thy goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up for them that fear thee!* When I conſider with what ardent piety, with what affectionate devotion, with what an amplified zeal, thy ſaints approach this heavenly ſupper; ſhame and confuſion overwhelm me, conſcious of my own, but lukewarm at the beſt, and two often perfectly ſtupid and frozen, heart; with what indifference and coldneſs I approach thy myſteries, and how little affected with thy mercies, how unprofitable under the gracious diſpenſation, I return. What a reproach is it, that my heart ſhould not be totally inflamed with the exceſs of thy love; that I ſhould have no ſenſe, no apprehenſion, of my greateſt happineſs, no hungrings and thirſtings after it? But, notwitſtanding the moving examples of many excellent perſons, ſhould ſtill continue void of all pathetical impreſſions; ſo ſcandalouſly unlike thoſe pious ſouls, whoſe zeal overflow'd in tears of joy, whoſe hearts, as well as mouths drink thankfully at this fountain of life, whoſe appetites were ſo ſtrong as never to be ſatisfied, till they had filled themſelves with thy bleſſed body, and fed liberally, and with a ſort of holy luxury indulged, at the celeſtial banquet.

A faith ſo unſhaken, ſo exalted, plainly confeſs'd they felt thy gracious preſence; and that their Lord was known to them, as heretofore to the diſciples at *Emmaus*, in *breaking of bread.* Luke xxiv. The burning of their hearts within them was an irrefragable teſtimony of it. But how far ſhort, alas! do I come unto their zeal and devotion? Look mercifully, Lord, upon my infirmities. And, if an equal portion of thy grace be too great a favour for thy poor unworthy ſervant; yet grant me ſuch a degree, ſuch a ſenſe of thy goodneſs and wonderful love, that I may be as ſincerely, tho' not ſo ſtrongly, affected with it. If raptures and extaſies of delight may not be my portion, yet deny me not improvement. But let my faith be ſtrengthened, my hope confirmed, my love ſo illuminated with this ſacrament, that, after having once taſted this heavenly manna, I may never more deſire the *onions and garlick of Egypt*, nor in my heart turn back from ſo good a God.

I know thy mercy and thy power, to which nothing is impoſſible, nothing hard. I know thou canſt, and I hope in thy good time thou wilt, viſit with more abundant meaſures of thy grace, and fulfil all my petitions. This confidence I cheriſh, becauſe my very deſires are from thee. And it is ſome comfort to me, that, tho' I am ſenſible of my weakneſs and my wants yet I long and pant after ſupplies and ſtrength; that I am not content with my miſery; but labour and pray, againſt my defects, and would gladly be better. And thus I will continue to do, till thou remove and vanquiſh my frailties, inſpire a bright and ardent zeal, and make me a happy partaker, firſt of the virtuous diſpoſition of thy devouter ſaints, and then of their reward and happineſs.

CHAP. XV.

Grace is the reward of humility and ſelf-denial.

CHRIST.

SINCE thy wiſhes are ſo commendable, and thy deſires of grace ſincere, I will inſtruct thee how thou ſhalt obtain it. Know then, this bleſſing is ſuſpended upon certain conditions. It muſt be ſought inſtantly, aſked fervently, waited for patiently, received thankfully, preſerved by humility, improved with diligence, and the time and meaſures of it ſubmitted entirely to the wiſdom and goodneſs of the heavenly donor. If thou feel few or no ſparks of it in thy mind, this is a proper ſubject to exerciſe thy meekneſs and godly ſorrow, but not to excite deſpair, or immoderate concern. For God frequently gives that in an inſtant, and with a liberal hand, which men had long expected without ſucceſs: He gratifies their conſtancy and patience, their importunity and perſeverance in prayer, with benefits, which excellent reaſons mov'd him to deny to their firſt requeſts, for the petitioners eternal advantage.

Should mens earlieſt expectations be anſwered, or prevented, the mighty bleſſing would be too exquiſite for meer nature to bear. And therefore holy raptures, and exalted virtue, are wiſely made the ſlow fruit of long time, and much patience. But, when thy deſires are not fulfilled, when thou receiveſt no increaſe, or when the grace thou once enjoyedſt is inſenſibly withdrawn; charge not God fooliſhly, but lament thy ſins, as the occaſion of this unhappineſs. A ſmall provocation may ſometimes

times be a bar to great advantages. Tho' nothing indeed ought to be reputed ſmall, which intercepts and hinders ſo valuable bleſſings. But be it little or great, let it be thy care to ſubdue and remove this obſtruction, and then the deſire of thy heart ſhall be granted.

When once corrupt ſelf-love is ſubdued, and the ſoul entirely ſubmitted and reſign'd to God, peace and ſatisfaction will flow in abundantly upon thy mind. For nothing can be grievous or unpalatable, to one, who hath renounced all intereſts of his own, and hath no inclinations or deſires left, but only, that he may be made an inſtrument of God's glory, and have all the counſel of the divine will, which is always beſt, fulfilled in and upon him. This man, ſo divorced from private reſpects and all created comforts, is in a proper condition for receiving grace, and taſting the ſpiritual delights of contemplation and devotion. The veſſel muſt be empty, before grace can be poured in; and when it is perfectly ſo, God delights to fill it up to the brim. The more a man is dead to the world and himſelf, the more heavenly-minded, the more mortify'd and humble; the ſwifter are the motions of heavenly grace towards him, the more liberal are its diſtributions, the more ſenſible, and delightful, and wonderful, its comforts and effects upon his heart.

Then ſhall he ſee the loving-kindneſs of the Lord; then ſhall he feel his ſoul and all its powers enlarged, and even ſtand aſtoniſhed at the happy change. Lo! Thus ſhall the man be bleſſed that feareth, and ſeeketh the Lord with all his ſtrength, and ſuffereth not his heart to wander after vanity. This man ſhall receive the bleſſed ſacrament with ſuperlative efficacy.

cy. He ſhall as truly be united to Chriſt in his ſoul, as the bread and wine, which repreſent him, are incorporated with the ſubſtance of his body. And that, which inclines God to be ſo particularly propitious and bountiful to ſuch a one, is that reſigned temper of mind, which propoſes the advancement of God's honour and glory, rather than his own advantage; and comes, more out of a ſenſe of duty and juſt homage to his Saviour, than with a proſpect of conſolation and ſatisfaction to himſelf.

CHAP. XVI.

A prayer for relief in our wants and ſpiritual diſtreſſes.

DISCIPLE.

HEAR me, O ſweeteſt and moſt beneficent Jeſus, whom I now approach with illuminated deſires of receiving thee into my ſoul. But how can I expect, that thou wilt not deſpiſe a place ſo unfit to entertain thy pure, thy glorious majeſty? Thou knoweſt, Lord, my weakneſſes and my wants; how great my ſufferings, and how heinous my ſins; how I am oppreſſed and afflicted, tempted and overpower'd; diſorder'd with paſſion, and ſtained with pollution, To thee I fly for ſuccour againſt my infirmities, for phyſick againſt my diſeaſes, for ſupport under my calamities and diſtreſſes. I cannot diſſemble my condition, I need not publiſh it, when addreſſing to one who knows all things, to whom my very inward parts are naked and open; to him, who alone can give effectual relief to my ſorrows, and ſupply my pungent neceſſities. Thy wiſdom knows, what ſuccours are moſt ſeaſonable and proper for my circumſtances, and how very ſlender and low my ſtock of virtue is.

Behold, I ſtand before thee, a helpleſs creature; *miſerable*, *and poor*, *and blind*, *and naked*, *and weak*, Rev. iii. ſupplicating thy grace, or at leaſt ſome fragments of it, to this hungry ſtarving beggar. O let me not periſh, but revive this ſinking wretch, with ſome crumbs of heavenly ſuſtenance. Let me not be deſtroyed with cold, but warm me with thy love; let me not fall into the pit, but enlighten my blind eyes with the ſplendor of thy gracious preſence. Give me a ſettled diſtaſte of worldly pleaſures, and make all here below inſipid and bitter to me. Reconcile me to croſſes and afflictions, by ſubmiſſion and unwearied patience; and leſſen every thing in this world, whether enjoyment or ſuffering, by teaching me to deſpiſe and forget it. Raiſe my ſtupid heart up to Heaven, and ſettle my affections there, that they may no longer wildly rove after the trifling objects of fleſh and ſenſe. Let me henceforth taſte delight in nothing but thee, nor *ſpend my money and labour for that which is not bread*; for thou alone art *meat indeed*, *and drink indeed*; my love and joy, my delight and exceeding great reward, my perfect and ſole good.

O that, now I am approaching the throne of grace, thou would'ſt command thy divine ſpirit to deſcend from heaven into my ſoul! O that my ſins and corrupt diſpoſitions might be the burnt-offering conſumed by it! that it might flame, and burn, and melt me down, purge away all my droſs, and, by the efficacy of its powerful heat, refine, and change, and incorporate me with thy ſelf. Let me not, I beſeech thee, be ſent empty away: Let me not return hungry and thirſty from ſo ſplendid an entertainment; but work in me mightily, and deal bountifully with thy ſervant, as thou uſeſt to do unto thoſe that love and fear thy name. I hope to find a wondrous alteration, and cannot think it ſtrange, if I feel my benummed heart all ſublimated, when I come to that fire, which ever burns without conſuming; or, if I find an entire ſeparation of all my worldly and groſs affections, when heated thoroughly with that love, whoſe excellence it is, to purify the heart by the activity, and to enlighten blind underſtandings by the brightneſs of its flame.

CHAP. XVII.

An act of praiſe.

DISCIPLE.

LOok down, O Lord, with favour and kind acceptance upon thy poor unworthy, but ſincere ſervant, now proſtrating himſelf before thine altar, with a moſt devout zeal, and all the paſſionate and tender reſentment, of which my heart is capable; wiſhing ſtill, that theſe good affections were greater and more worthy of thee, and that I might meet and embrace my Lord, with all that perfection of holineſs and ardent joy, by which thy beſt and deareſt ſaints recommended their prayers and praiſes, and ſo eminently ſignalized themſelves, in the celebration of this bleſſed ſacrament. O God! my love and life, my only and eternal happineſs, were but my power proportioned to my will, none of thoſe excellent patterns ever expreſs'd more awful reverence, more ardent devotion, more earneſt love, more humble gratitude than I at this time am diſpoſed, and moſt earneſtly wiſh, to expreſs.

I know, O Lord, how far I am from being worthy to receive at thy hand ſuch plentiful effuſions of grace, ſuch diſtinguiſhing marks of thy kindneſs, as enabled them to be ſo pious and exemplary in all their addreſſes to thee. But yet my heart, and all its affections, ſuch as they are, I dedicate to thy ſervice. The utmoſt a devout mind can conceive or deſire, I offer in thy preſence, with all poſſible reſpect, with ſincerity as unfeigned, as if my zeal were much more bright and inflamed. I do it without the leaſt reſerve; all I have and am, is entirely thine; moſt freely conſecrated to thy uſe, my God and Lord, my almighty creator, and moſt merciful redeemer. Take then a full poſſeſſion of one, upon ſo many accounts thy own. Enter, and dwell, and reign in me, abſolute, and for ever. Behold I open my arms wide, to embrace my Lord and ſpouſe. I deſire at this time to receive thee into my heart, with the ſame reverence and humility, the ſame reſpectful gratitude and love, the ſame faith and hope, and religious deſire, with which the holy mother received thee in her virgin womb; when ſhe returned that pious anſwer to the angel, who brought the glad tidings of thy myſterious incarnation: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word*, Luke i.

And, as thy ſervant *John Baptiſt*, that greateſt among them that are born of women, thy meſſenger ſent to prepare thy way before thee, felt the power-

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ſul influence of the divine preſence, and confeſs'd it, by leaping in his mother's womb for joy; *Luke* i. As he, aſcribing nothing to himſelf, did afterwards declare himſelf the *bridegroom's friend whoſe joy was full in hearing the bridegroom's voice*; John iii. ſo do I deſire to offer myſelf, without any exception, or regard to private intereſt, and to rejoice and live in thee alone for ever. May all the zeal and raptures, the extaſies and heavenly viſions of the ſaints; may all their virtues and their praiſes; may every creature in heaven and earth; may all that I have ever prayed for, and all that pray for me, contribute to thy glory; and may thy name be, only and ever, magnified by all and each of them.

Accept, O Lord, my hearty wiſhes and deſires of praiſe and thankſgiving, as infinite as thy majeſty; for they are thine of right, and mayeſt thou be worthily bleſſed by them. This is, and ſhall be, my daily, hourly prayer. Nor will I content my ſelf with wiſhing and endeavouring this, ſingly and in my own perſon, but do moſt ſeriouſly invite and conjure all the bleſſed ſpirits above, all thy faithful people upon earth, to join in this moſt juſt tribute of honour; and, in full concert and perfect harmony, to publiſh thy praiſe and glory, in all times and places.

Come in, all ye nations and countries, all kindreds, and languages of the world, and bear your parts in ſinging forth the ſweet, the ſaving, the holy name of Jeſus. Raiſe your devotions, as high as human nature can go, for in this you can never exceed. And you devout diſciples of this bleſſed maſter, as oft as you receive this holy ſacrament, ſee that you

reverenly

reverently adore this myſtery of love. And then be ſure with a moſt fervent faith, and univerſal charity, to beſeech this gracious ſaviour, that the effects of his death may be as general as the deſign of it; that he who died for all, may be glorified in the ſalvation of all. And may thoſe ſupplications be ſucceſsful in obtaining mercy, for yourſelves, for every ſinner, and for me, the chief of ſinners in particular.

And, when you return from this precious heavenly feaſt, full of grace and joy, remember then to look back with tender compaſſion upon your weaker brethren; and wiſh, that every contrite and afflicted ſoul may be admitted to the like comforts, may feel the ſame wonderful efficacy from this myſterious table; and let not me, the leaſt and moſt unworthy of your brethren, who want them the moſt of any, be denied a part in your charitable interceſſions.

CHAP. XVIII.

Againſt the nice diſputes concerning this ſacrament.

CHRIST.

IF thou would'ſt preſerve thy faith incorrupt, and thy devotions from diſtraction, content thy ſelf with reverencing and admiring theſe holy myſteries; and do not indulge a buſy curioſity, in bold and unprofitable enquiries concerning them. For this is the way to damp a godly zeal, and to perplex thy mind with intricate and endleſs doubts. Remember, *it is the glory of God to conceal a thing, Prov.* xxv. 2. and his ſupereminent wiſdom and power procures itſelf juſt veneration, by doing more than man is able to comprehend. I do not mean by this to exact a blind obedience, but expect, and commend, the uſe of reaſon in the ſearch of divine truth. Provided always, that it be tempered with ſobriety and modeſty, with tractableneſs and a due reſpect to what I my ſelf have revealed in my word; and what my church hath faithfully delivered, in her doctrines and expoſitions upon it.

Happy is that meekneſs and poverty of ſpirit, which induſtriouſly declines the rugged thorny paths of controverſy and captious diſputes; and walks in the plain ſmooth way of duty, and practical religion; which ſtudies God's commands, and labours to underſtand things of a ſize with its capacity; without troubling it ſelf about his decrees and diſpenſations. Too many inſtances there are of daring men, who, by preſuming to ſound the deep things of religion, have cavilled and argued themſelves out of all religion. Theſe men miſtake their buſineſs. For the thing required of a chriſtian, is not penetration, and ſubtilty of wit, critical diſtinction, or ſublime notions; but victorious faith, and an honeſt holy life; ſobriety, and temperance, and chaſtity, juſtice and charity, piety and devotion. How oft is reaſon puzzled, even in matters relating to creatures inferior to thy ſelf? And will not this reflection controul, and cure, an expectation ſo extravagant and abſurd, as that of being able to give a clear account of things above thee; nay, of perfectly underſtanding thy great, thy infinite creator himſelf? Submit thy reaſon to revelation, and let humility, and reverence to God, recommend thy faith; and then, though thou canſt not attain *all* knowledge, yet thou ſhalt be ſure not to want *any*, that is neceſſary or profitable for thee.

Many men are much diſſatisfied in their minds, with doubts concerning the true nature of faith, and difficulties which ariſe concerning my preſence in the ſacrament. Theſe doubts are not always ſinful, nor always from themſelves; but frequently owing to the temptations of the devil, and induſtriouſly inſtilled by him, with wicked artifice, and malicious deſign. Be not therefore too anxious upon theſe occaſions. Trouble not thy ſelf to argue nicely, nor employ thy thoughts upon the matter; nor hold thy ſelf concerned to be able to anſwer every objection, which he puts into thy head: But keep cloſe to ſcripture, and do thy duty; and the enemy will ſoon retreat, when he finds thee neglect his attempts. Think not theſe inward diſtractions a ſign that thou art forſaken of God. They are rather the contrary, and a mark of grace. God ſuffers them to exerciſe thy patience, to try thy conſtancy, and to promote thy ſpiritual advantage. Wert thou a reprobate, thou would'ſt not thus be aſſaulted; for ſuch the devil is ſure of already, and temptations are thrown away upon them. They are the faithful, the ſincere, the devout chriſtians, whom he diſturbs and torments; for, in ſo doing, he hopes to enlarge his dominion, and to ſeduce thoſe who were not his before.

Proceed then in thy chriſtian courſe with reſolution and patience, and ſtill frequent the ſacrament, with ſtedfaſt faith, and humble veneration. Whatever there thou findeſt to exceed thy underſtanding, put it to God's account; and leave him to make it good, tho' thou can'ſt not conceive, how it ſhould be done. He will not deceive thee; but they, who rely upon their own underſtandings, are ſure to deceive themſelves. Remember, God hath ſaid, that *he walks and dwells with the humble, and ſhews his ways to the meek*; *that he reveal'd himſelf to babes*, that he opens the eyes of the honeſt and ſincere; but hides his grace and knowledge from the proud, and wiſe in his own conceit. Reaſon (experience proves) may both deceive and be deceiv'd, for it is but human. But faith has God for its foundation, and cannot err; becauſe it depends upon one who is truth it ſelf, and conſequently incapable of miſtaking, or of impoſing upon others.

'Tis therefore highly fit, and in matters of religion abſolutely neceſſary, that theſe two principles ſhould know their order, and reſpective ſtations; and each contain it ſelf within its proper limitation. Faith (which ſuppoſes a revelation received and acknowledg'd) challenges the higheſt place, and reaſon ought to keep her diſtance, to ſerve and follow after, not to ſet bounds to, or aſſume, and encroach, and uſurp over, the other. For faith and charity are the two pillars, upon which chriſtianity is ſupported; the two governing principles of a good man's opinions and actions. And their authority and influence is, in no one inſtance, more conſiderable, than in this of the bleſſed ſacrament. God is infinite and eternal, his power unbounded, and incomprehenſible. He *does whatſoever pleaſeth him in heaven and earth*, and who can *underſtand his counſel*, *or find out all his methods?* If the works of God were ſuch, as human reaſon could penetrate with eaſe, they would loſe great part of their glory. We ſhould ſoon abate of our awe and veneration for their author, if his dealings were not above the power of our tongues to expreſs, and the utmoſt extent of our imagination to conceive. *O that men would therefore praiſe the Lord for his goodneſs, and confeſs the wonders that he hath done for the children of men!* Pſal. cvii. *For great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty!* Rev. xiv. *How unſearchable are thy judgments, and thy ways paſt ſinding out!* Rom. xi.

THE END.

To make this as compleat as the *London* Edition, it is thought proper to add Dr. *Stanhope*'s Meditations and Prayers for Sick Perſons; for which Reaſon take the Preface to it as follows.

THE *Publiſher of this Edition, being deſirous to render this Book as generally uſeful as it was poſſible; and conſidering, that the two great Occaſions of Extraordinary Devotion are the Seaſon of receiving the Bleſſed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and that of Sickneſs; thought the Former reaſonably well provided for, in the Fourth Book of the foregoing Tranſlation. And I was more willing to provide for the Latter, in regard a great part of that which follows lay by me, ſome time ſince compoſed at the Requeſt of a Lady (now I hope with God) who deſired my Aſſiſtance in preparing ſome Meditations, that might be proper for her then very weak and languiſhing Condition. The manner in which they were drawn, ſeemed not ill to ſuit with the Temper of the Author, to which they are fixed. And the Deſign of caſting them into this Form is to promote, in ſome meaſure, thoſe Reaſonings with a man's own mind, which at all times indeed, but eſpecially in ſuch Circumſtances, would prove of excellent Advantage, if frequent Uſe did but render them more familiar.*

I am far from thinking, that theſe few Sheets have any thing in them of equal Perfection, with thoſe many pious and well weighed Treatiſes, written by Others upon this Subject. Much leſs would I have the Reader imagine, that either This, or Thoſe, can ſuperſede the Neceſſity and Benefit of the Prayers of the Church, and the Advice of our Spiritual Phyſicians. Theſe ought always to be conſulted in the firſt Place, before Mat-

ters come to Extremity; and a conſcientious Perſon, after all his own Care, will find Buſineſs enough for them. But the Exerciſes of Piety preſcribed in ſuch Tracts will be good Helps, and fill up their Intervals very well, which the Languiſhings of a Sick Bed many times allow, when it cannot be expected, that the ordinary Guides of our Souls ſhould be ready with their Attendance. Whoſe Directions in the Meaſures of Mens Repentance, while under the afflicting Hand of God, and the proper Methods of expreſſing their Thankfulneſs when deliver'd from it, as well as their prudent Comforts adminiſtred to wounded and contrite Hearts, will notwithſtanding be always ſeaſonable and neceſſary.

The devout Chriſtian, who converſes much with the Word of God, and the Offices of the Church, will find himſelf able to make large Additions to the following Devotions. In which it was much more difficult to reſtrain my Pen, than to expatiate a great deal farther. But I conſidered the Condition of the Perſons they were intended for; and therefore contented myſelf with ſuch ſhort Hints under each Head, as the Weakneſs of that would bear. If what I have offered here may tend to the promoting of Piety, and the ſanctifying ſuch Diſpenſations of Providence to any one of my Chriſtian Brethren, by kindling in them a holy Zeal, and inſpiring good Purpoſes, I have my End. And this, with God's Bleſſing I hope it will, and heartily pray that it may in ſome Degree be capable of.

GEO. STANHOPE.

Meditations and Prayers
FOR
SICK PERSONS.

MEDITATION I.

Upon ſickneſs in general, the author, cauſes, and end of it.

I. COME, my ſoul, and let us reaſon together, concerning the things that have befallen us. This body, to which thou art united, flags and droops; the vigor of it is abated, its beauty impaired and decayed; the limbs once well knit, are grown feeble, and with great difficulty ſuſtain their weight, or accompliſh thy purpoſes. They ſcarce perform any office aright; and when they do, it is with pantings and tremblings, with wearineſs and faintineſs. They ſeem to groan and ſink under their burden; and each member, which was formerly wont to ſerve thee, with wonderful chearfulneſs and activity, now calls for ſuccours from abroad, and is no longer able to ſupport it ſelf. This is ſuch a change, as ought not to be felt only, but well conſidered too. *Be not thou* therefore *like to the horſe and mule, which have no underſtanding*, Pſal. xxxii. 10. but loſe all impreſſions, as ſoon as the ſenſe of the ſtroke ceaſes. It is thy priviledge and duty both, to reflect and meditate; to call back things already paſt, and anticipate thoſe which are to come; and, as for ſuch as are actually preſent, to acquaint thy ſelf with the cauſes and reaſons, the ends and uſes of them, as well as with the nature and quality of the things themſelves. All theſe are operations proper to a reaſoning ſoul, and the preſent occaſion calls upon thee for a due exerciſe of them all. For thou canſt not be ſick, as becomes a man, and a chriſtian, without enquiring, whence, and wherefore it is, that thou art ſo. The firſt and moſt neceſſary ſtep, both toward the patient enduring of the anguiſh, and the ſucceſsful application of the remedies, is to learn the true cauſe of our diſeaſe.

II. Know therefore moſt certainly, that what the Holy Ghoſt hath ſpoken concerning affliction in general, is in an eſpecial manner true concerning this particular branch of it, *It cometh not forth out of the duſt, neither doth trouble ſpring out of the ground*, Job v. 6. Our ſelves indeed were taken thence, and moulded into man. But this was not the effect of any natural cauſe; the God of nature, by his almighty power, commanded earth and aſhes into this beauteous and wonderful ſtructure of a human body. And he alone, who created and formed it, commands it back into its native duſt again. Every diſeaſe and decay, whether it be the effect of accident or time, whether what we uſually call violent and ſhortning our days, or whether according to the courſe of nature, and ſlower declinings of age; all are but ſo many ſhocks, by which this fleſhly tabernacle is ſhaken, or moulders by degrees, and, by growing more ruinous and uninhabitable, gives the ſoul warning to ſeek another dwelling. And theſe are all diſpoſed, by a moſt ſteady and particular providence; and, if traced up to their firſt original, have a cauſe as ſublime as the body it ſelf hath. Nature indeed goes on in a ſmooth and ſettled courſe; and ſo the hand that guides this engine is far diſtant, and ſeldom obſerved; but even nature it ſelf is God's inſtrument, tho' the proceſs and the long chain of cauſes be ſo intricate, and withal ſo familiar, and frequently alike, that the events reſulting from thence ceaſe to be wonderful in our eyes. A cold, or a ſurfeit; a weak conſtitution, or impure blood; unwholſome diet, and ill hours; neglect of means, and careleſneſs of our health; advice taken too late, or a medicine improper, or out of ſeaſon; theſe are what we commonly charge our indiſpoſitions and our miſcarriages upon. And thus far we may ſay true; but, if we go no higher, we ſtop a great deal too ſoon. For it is eaſy to diſcern a hand above, that directs and limits all theſe; that ſmites the ſtrong, and preſerves the tender; ſlays by the ſlighteſt accidents, and recovers from the moſt deſperate; and this, in a manner moſt ſurprizing, ſuch as no human art or ſkill had any expectation, or can give any account of.

III. If then thou haſt convinced thy ſelf, that the finger of God is in all theſe things; purſue this thought (my ſoul) a little farther; and ſee what a fair and wide ſcene of knowledge and heavenly wiſdom it will ſoon open to thee. For what is God? Is not he that very being, infinitely powerful, and wiſe, and juſt, and good? Is it not he, who made thee, and ſuſtains thee, the ſame who governs and diſpoſes this whole world, and all the creatures in it, after the counſel of his own will? He, with whom the lives of his ſervants are exceeding precious? In whoſe ſight the hairs of our head are all numbred? Without whoſe permiſſion not a ſparrow can fall to the ground, and in whoſe eſtimation the meaneſt of thoſe, that are made after his own image, are of infinitely more value than many ſparrows? Remember, that ſuch is the author of thy diſeaſe: And this ſingle remembrance will lead thee to ſuch reſolutions, ſuch holy and ſeaſonable reflections as cannot, if duly attended, and carefully improved, but work in thee that frame of mind, which beſt ſuits thy preſent circumſtances, and muſt needs diſpoſe thee to reap large and laſting advantages from them. For how canſt thou conſider his power, and not dread the dire effects of an angry, or reſt ſecure under the favour and protection of a reconciled God? Or how canſt thou meditate on his wiſdom, and not be contented with his appointments for thee? Or on his juſtice, and not be more zealouſly concerned, to ſeek a pardon for thoſe ſins, which have provoked, and made thee an object of it? Or on his goodneſs, and not be even thankful under thy ſufferings? For what is grievous to fleſh and blood, is yet ordained to excellent and heavenly purpoſes, and it is out of very kindneſs that thou art thus afflicted: How canſt thou think upon his right of creation, without acknowledging his bounty, in giving and continuing thy being, and all the comforts of it? Or how, laſtly, upon his preference of mankind above the reſt of the creatures here below; without obſerving the peculiar prerogative, which renders men more valuable, that of a noble and reaſonable ſoul, which the others want; and ſo cheriſhing the hope of immortality, whereunto man only, of all here below, is appointed? A hope, which aſſures us, we ſhall not periſh, but only be changed; and, in the midſt of languiſhing and departing ſtruggles, can bear up under, nay, can triumph over the agonies of death. Here then will I fix my thoughts, I will approach the almighty with a ſong, and addreſs my prayer unto the God of my life.

HYMN.

GOD is the Lord, even God alone: He killeth, and he maketh alive, he woundeth, and he healeth, Deut. xxxii. 39.

Thou, Lord, haſt power of life and death, 1 Sam. ii. 6. *Thou ſcourgeſt, and ſheweſt mercy*, Wiſd. xvi. 13. *Thou leadeſt to the gates of the grave, and bringeſt up again*, Job xiii. 2.

It is he that holdeth our ſoul in life: and ſuffereth not our feet to ſlip, Pſal. lxvi. 8.

And again, when we are miniſhed and brought low; thro' ſickneſs, thro' any affliction or ſorrow; Pſal. cvii. 39, 40.

Tho' he ſuffer us to be evil intreated: yet helpeth he the meek out of miſery, or maketh all his bed in his ſickneſs, Pſal. xli. 3.

For it is neither herb, nor mollifying plaiſter, that reſtoreth men to health: but thy word, O Lord, which healeth all things, Wiſd. xvi. 12.

My time is always in thy hand; unto God the Lord belong the iſſues of life and death, Pſal. xxxi. 17. lxviii. 20.

All creatures wait upon thee: when thou openeſt thy hand they are filled with good, Pſal. civ. 27.

When thou ſendeſt forth thy ſpirit, they are created; when thou hideſt thy face, they are troubled; when thou takeſt away their breath, they die, and are turned again to their duſt, ver. 28, 29, 30.

I will ſing to the Lord as long as I live: I will praiſe my God, while I have my being, ver. 33.

My meditation of him ſhall be ſweet; and my joy ſhall be in the Lord, ver. 34.

When thou ſaidſt, Seek ye my face: my heart ſaid unto me, Thy face, Lord, will I ſeek, Pſal. xxvii. 8.

O hide not thy face from me: nor caſt away thy ſervant in diſpleaſure, ver. 9.

Thou haſt been my helper: leave me not, neither forſake me, O God of my ſalvation, ver. 10.

Some put their truſt in ſtrength *of* nature; *and* ſome in medicines: *but I will remember the name of the Lord our God*, Pſal. xx. 7.

O put not your truſt (in phyſicians, *nor) in any child of man: for there is no help in them*, Pſal. cxlvi. 2.

But bleſſed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help: and whoſe hope is in the Lord his God, ver. 4.

Save, Lord, and hear me, O King of Heaven: when I call upon thee, Pſal. xx. 9.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, *&c.*

As it was in the Beginning, *&c.*

PRAYER.

O Almighty God, the father of the ſpirits of all fleſh, whoſe never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth: I deſire, with the profoundeſt humility and reverence, to proſtrate both my ſoul and body before thee, begging that thou would'ſt give me grace, to behold and admire thy providence, in all thy diſpenſations towards my ſelf and the reſt of mankind. I acknowledge it thy bounty, that I ever was at all; and adore thy mercy and long ſuffering, for preſerving me thus long in the land of the living. My many days and years of health and comfort were thy gift; and the recoveries from former ſickneſſes, as well as the prevention of thoſe dangers and diſeaſes I never felt, are owing to thee alone. Man doth not live by bread and care, nor is relieved by medicines only, but by the word and bleſſing which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Grant me, I beſeech thee, a ſtrong and due ſenſe of my entire dependance upon thee, and grace to improve under, and behave my ſelf in conformity to that unqueſtionable truth. That whether the means uſed for my eaſe and relief ſucceed, I may aſcribe all the glory and thanks to thee alone: Or whether thou thinkeſt fit to deny them their intended effects, I may humble my ſelf under thy mighty hand, and remember that thou, Lord, haſt done it. Inſpire me, I beſeech thee, with that true and heavenly wiſdom, which may help me to *diſcern aright the reaſons, and enable me to anſwer the ends of this correction, and all other thy dealings with me. That I may patiently bear the rod, and glorify him who hath appointed it; and, in all conditions, ſubmit my ſelf entirely to thy good pleaſure, and praiſe God in the day of my viſitation. So ſhall this weakneſs of my body contribute to the ſtrengthning of my virtues, and the health of my ſoul; through the merits of him, who redeemed them both at the price of his own precious blood; even thy ſon, and my ever bleſſed Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Amen.

MED. II.

Of the power of God, and the affections ariſing from thence, viz. *Dread of his anger, and truſt in his protection.*

I. WHICH way ſoever we turn our eyes, ten thouſand objects meet us, which all prove and preach to us the almighty power of God. The glorious fabrick of the univerſe, and every thing contained therein, nay even the meaneſt, and, in human eſteem, moſt deſpicable creature, proclaims aloud the omnipotence of its maker. And the good order, in which theſe are contained, does as much magnify his preſerving, as their exiſtence does his creating, power. But man needs not look abroad: Himſelf is ten thouſand arguments to demonſtrate this to himſelf. The curious ſtructure of his body, the excellencies of its divine inhabitant the ſoul, and the wonderful amazing union, and mutual correſpondence of both theſe, could be the workmanſhip of nothing leſs than omnipotence. This mixture of ſpirit and matter, of periſhing and immortal; the ſagacity of the one to influence and govern, the readineſs of the other to obey, and be actuated; the ſprightlineſs and vigor, or elſe the heavineſs and diſorder, and reciprocal diſabilities, which each of theſe convey to the other, are moſt certainly the Lord's doing, and ought to be marvellous in our eyes. Alas! how ſhould man ſubſiſt one moment, even in the ſtate of his greateſt perfection, did not this great artificer watch over his own work, and conſtantly ſuſtain it; did not he check and moderate that conflict, which the warring elements of our body are continually engaging in? But eſpecially, now that the corruption of our nature, and the tranſgreſſion of our firſt parent, hath let death and diſeaſes look upon us; there needs no repeated infliction. For, if God be but paſſive, and withdraw his reſtraint, the enemy is always ready to devour us, and we carry the ſeeds of torment and deſtru-tion about our own perſons. And God hath ſo decreed, that every man ſhall once fall by the ſtroke of death. A decree, which, in our greateſt ſtrength, in the very bloom and beauty of youth, contrary to our own expectations, or the fears of our moſt beloved friends, he ſometimes executes: To teach us, that our being is wholly precarious, that we have nothing ſtable here, no title even to life it ſelf; but are all concluded by a ſentence already paſs'd. For all our days are in the nature of a reprieve; the prolonging whereof is an act of mere mercy, as the cutting it ſhort is exempt from the leaſt appearance of injuſtice. God then cannot want means and opportunities for this. All nature is his; the malice of wicked men, the ſpight of our foes, the miſtaken kindneſs of our friends, the errors of our phyſicians, and the miſapplication of their medicines, are all directed and over-ruled to this end. The humours of our bodies, the temper of the air, and every element indeed when he gives the word, turns Executioner; or, in truth, if he but pleaſe to permit, the thing will do it ſelf. He burns us up by fevers, or drowns us in dropſies; ſtrikes us dead in a moment by apoplexies, buries us alive by palſies, conſumes us by ſlow and imperceptible degrees, with lingering conſumptions. Thou ſeeſt, my ſoul, how eaſily God can do theſe things, by a thouſand inſtances of friends and acquaintance gone before thee, and by thy own yet more ſenſible experience, in this declining and languiſhing body of thine. Thou art ſenſible now, that no fleſh is able to ſtand before God, and how quickly we are blaſted by the breath of his diſpleaſure. That, to him alone belong power and ſtrength, and to poor mortal man, nothing but miſery and weakneſs, and vanity.

II. Surely (my ſoul) had theſe impreſſions been freſh and deep upon me heretofore, they would have reſtrained my wild career in ſin, and prevented many grievous and bold tranſgreſſions, which I have reaſon to fear might provoke the divine majeſty to caſt me upon this bed of ſickneſs. For do we provoke the Lord to jealouſy? Are we ſtronger than he? Alas! my own condition has taught me, how vain and fool-hardy it is, not only to fight againſt God, but not to fear and ſtand in perpetual awe of him: How fatal to play with this conſuming fire:

And I cannot but wiſh with all the faculties of my ſoul, that I had better conſider'd this point long ago. For he is a terrible and a mighty God; and when he enters into controverſy with mankind, no fleſh can withſtand it. At leaſt, my ſoul, let us make that good uſe of this reflection now, to be unfeignedly ſorry for what is paſt; and more cautious and obſervant for the time to come. The flower is wither'd indeed, and droops its feeble head; but it is not quite cut down. O let us yet humble our ſelves in his fear, and conſider, what a yet more dreadful vengeance God hath in ſtore, for hardened and obſtinate wretches. If the decays and pains of the body alone are ſo grievous, how ſhall we bear the perdition of both body and ſoul? How ſhall we dwell with everlaſting burnings? If the rod of God, theſe comparatively light puniſhments, repreſent to us the terrors of his angry juſtice; who can bear the approach of that diſmal day, when he ſhall come in thunder and flames, to make an abſolute end of this whole world, and deliver wicked ſinners over to unavoidable deſtruction? An eternity of torments! Jeſus defend us! Who can entertain even the moſt diſtant thought of it, without trembling, confuſion and aſtoniſhment? Fall down then, my ſoul, and humble thy ſelf under the mighty hand of God; that thou may'ſt not periſh with this frail body. Loſe no time in making thy peace, but work with all thy might; eſpecially now, that the day of life ſeems to decline, and the night comes on, wherein no man can work.

III. Remember, my ſoul, for thy encouragement, that, *if thou abound in the work of the Lord, thy*

thy labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xx. 58. He is no leſs mighty to ſave than to deſtroy; with him no word is impoſſible; and, if he will, he can even yet raiſe this feeble body, and reſtore it to perfect health and alacrity. Nay, he will certainly do it, if that be beſt for me; and if it be not, he will do yet more. For there will come a day, in which this vile earthly part ſhall be enlivened again; and, if it moulder into duſt, and paſs thro' infinite different forms, yet will he purſue this body through all its changes, collect its diſperſed atoms, command the little heaps of duſt to awake, and tranſlate it into a glorious and a ſpiritual body. 1 *Cor*. xv. A body fit for a ſtate of incorruption, and the inheritance of that kingdom, where this fleſh and blood, which we now ſet ſo partial and extravagant a value upon, is not worthy to enter. I will therefore ſtrengthen my ſelf in the power and promiſes of my God; and, with holy *Job*, *tho' he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him*, Job xiii. 15. For even then I will lay me down, in hope of a joyful reſurrection to eternal life; and commit my body like ſeed, to the ground; not to be loſt, but improved, by corrupting there. For thou, O God, art unchangeable, and thy promiſes without repentance; and promiſed thou haſt, *that our vile body ſhall be faſhion'd like unto Chriſt's glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby thou art able to ſubdue all things to thy ſelf*. Phil. iii. 21.

EJACULATIONS.

IN *thee therefore, O Lord, will I put my truſt: let me never be put to confuſion, but deliver me in thy righteouſneſs, and ſave me.* Pſal. lxxi.

Be thou my ſtrong hold whereunto I may alway reſort: thou haſt promiſed to help me, for thou art my houſe of defence, and my caſtle.

Deliver me, O my God, from the adverſary's hand: Preſerve me from the hunter of ſouls.

He layeth ſnares, and is mighty to deſtroy: but yet the Lord, who dwelleth on high is mightier.

Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for: thou haſt been my hope even from my Youth.

Through thee have I been holden up ever ſince I was born: Thou art he that took me out of my mother's womb; my praiſe ſhall be always of thee.

O caſt me not away in the time of my diſtreſs: forſake me not, when my ſtrength faileth me.

Let them be confounded and periſh that are againſt my ſoul: let the wicked ſpirits be cover'd with ſhame and diſhonour, that ſeek to do me evil.

As for me, I will patiently tarry the Lord's leiſure: and will put my truſt in the Lord, Pſal. xxvii. 16.

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he ſhall ſtand at the laſt day upon the earth, Job xix. 25.

And tho' after my ſkin worms deſtroy this body; yet in my fleſh ſhall I ſee God: ver. 26.

Whom I ſhall ſee for my ſelf: And mine eyes ſhall behold, and not another, ver. 72.

For he is the reſurrection and the life: And whoſoever believeth in him, tho' he die, yet ſhall he live again,' Job xi. 25.

Glory be to the Father, &c.

As it was in the Beginning, &c.

PRAYER.

O Moſt glorious Lord God, terrible in thy judgments, and wonderful in all thy dealings towards the children of men; poſſeſs my ſoul, I beſeech thee, with awful and becoming apprehenſions of thy majeſty, give me a ſerious ſenſe and ſorrow, for ever having hardned my heart from thy fear, and provoked that vengeance which can conſume me in a moment. Lord, convince me whom I ought to dread, and let me never, for the gratifying any ſinful inclination, forget any more the Lord my maker, and incur the diſpleaſure of him, who is able to caſt both body and ſoul into hell. And, as I implore thy grace, that this conſideration of thy power may effectually reſtrain all my unruly appetites; ſo, I beſeech thee, let it be my ſtay and confidence in all dangers and diſtreſſes. That, forſaking the broken reeds of all worldly ſuccours, I may put my whole truſt in thy mercy; and, evermore ſerving thee in holineſs and pureneſs of living, may even in death it ſelf be more than conquerer. Even in that joyful day, when all enemies ſhall be deſtroyed: when thy children ſhall come forth from the dark priſons of the grave, and ſhine like ſuns in the kingdom of thee their father. Grant this thou rock of my ſoul, for thy dear ſon Jeſus Chriſt's ſake.

MED. III.

Of the juſtice of God: And the penitential ſorrow reſulting from it.

I. GOD is a being infinitely perfect and good; the ſupreme and original good; the author and maker of all things; and cannot therefore be ſuppoſed, either to hate what himſelf hath made, or to have given being to any thing, with a deſign to render it miſerable. His providence and power, which made the ſubject of the two former meditations, are, in their own nature and primitive intention, deſigned for the benefit and ſecurity of his creatures. And, if at any time they become the inſtruments or diſpenſers of grief and pain, this is an effect purely accidental; an operation ſo foreign, that it is even extorted from them, and wholly imputable to ſome other cauſe. And this is the caſe of mankind; once favour'd above all their fellow creatures, and ſafe under the ſhelter and ſmiles of an almighty protector: But, by their own fault, deprived of this defence; left naked and expoſed to miſchiefs and ſufferings; and not only diſarmed of their ſureſt guard, but in perpetual danger of being deſtroy'd, by that very hand, which was formerly their friend and defender. O wretched conſequences of ſin! that did not only render our firſt parents and all their poſterity liable to bodily death, and all the diſeaſes and pains that lead to it; but left in us a fatal averſion to all good, and a ſtrong propenſity

to

to all evil. By indulging hereof we add our own actual guilt, to that which our ſinful parents had derived down to us; and by iniquities without number, by wilful, repeated, habitual, and daring tranſgreſſions, confirm and aggravate this ſentence of death, and arm the juſtice of God againſt our ſelves.

II. Wonder not then, if thou ſeeſt ſo many dreadful ſpectacles of affliction in the world; nor murmur, when thou thy ſelf art bound in the ſame fetters, and ſore laden with the burthen of affliction. But remember, that God is righteous, and thou, and theſe people are wicked; that he is holy and juſt, as well as good, and, tho' he does not willingly grieve the children of men, yet their iniquities put a ſort of violence upon him, which he cannot reſiſt. They quite weary him out, and render it impoſſible, (that is, inconſiſtent with his other attributes and the perfection of his nature) to let ſuch men go always unpuniſhed. Nay, even in thoſe infinitely more dreadful torments of another world, his perfections are concerned to vindicate themſelves; for tho' theſe be terrible, above what we are able to expreſs or conceive, yet are they juſt. And, at the ſame time that we may be apt to queſtion, whether ſo great ſeverity be conſiſtent with the character of our judge, we prove the wiſdom of our lawgiver; and, that even eternal pains were neceſſary, ſince even all this will not contain us in our duty, and effectually reſtrain us from tranſgreſſing.

III. And this, my ſoul, is thy caſe. Theſe everlaſting plagues are the deſerved wages of thy wickedneſs.

edneſs. For do but deſcend into thy ſelf, (as it becomes thee to do, now more eſpecially) and there take an exact ſurvey of thy miſeries and frailties; thy raging paſſions, and ungovern'd appetites: Aſk thy ſelf, what abuſes and miſemployments of health thou haſt been guilty of. Whether thou haſt not neglected and forgot God and Heaven too much, and been too full of ſollicitude and fondneſs for this preſent world; whether thou haſt not ſlighted his worſhip and ſacrament, and diſregarded his word, or whether theſe have been formally and coldly frequented. Examine the heavineſs of thy affections, the wandrings and negligence of thy mind, in publick and private devotions. [*Here it may be convenient to inſtance in any other particular againſt our duty to God.*] See again the violation of juſtice and charity to thy neighbour, whether thou haſt honeſtly diſcharged the offices of the ſeveral capacities and relations God hath placed thee in; [*A Huſband or Wife, a Maſter or Miſtreſs, a Son or Daughter, a Magiſtrate, a Subject, a Parent, a Brother or Siſter, and the like.*] If thou haſt not been guilty of groſs and manifeſt injuſtice in thy dealings, yet haſt thou done wrong to no man's ſoul, by ill advice, or wicked example? Nor to the bodies of any, by malice or contempt, by ill treatment, cruel uſage, want of compaſſion and care for their infirmities? What reputations haſt thou injured by ſcandal and cenſure; by falſe and uncharitable judgments; by buſy meddling with matters that concern thee not; by officiouſly ſpreading, or too haſtily believing ill reports; by encouraging, repeating, and being pleaſed with detracting or uncharitable reflections; or if by none of theſe, yet at leaſt by neglecting to reprove, or to diſcountenance, a ſlandering tongue, and to deliver the innocent from its ſecret ſtabs? [*Here again be particular in any other ſins you have been guilty of againſt your neighbour.*] Turn thy eyes inward once more, and behold the breaches of that duty thou oweſt to thy ſelf; the intemperance and irregularity of thy deſires; the murmurings and diſcontents; the infirmities indulged; the paſſions unſubdued; the negligence in thy greateſt concern; the love of unlawful, and the abuſe of lawful, diverſions and pleaſures. Theſe are things ſo incident to our ſtate, that no man's conſcience can ſpeak peace to him in them all; and happy art thou in thoſe, where thine condemns thee not. But know withal, *that God is greater than thy heart, and knoweth all things*, 1 John iii. 20. He keeps exact account of thy lurking corruptions, and ſecret faults; the unobſerved, or the long ſince forgotten, miſdemeanors of thy life. The dreadful catalogue whereof, could they be ſet before thee, would give a diſmal proſpect full of horror and confuſion, and intolerable amazement. So that thou muſt of neceſſity acknowledge thy ſelf a companion of filth and miſery; a wretch, that, if God ſhould enter into judgment with, thou haſt reaſon to expect nothing better than indignation and fury; to be ſet up as a mark of his vengeance, and, by ſome ſwift exemplary deſtruction, hurried violently away into the hotteſt flames of hell.

IV. Thus much I am ſadly ſenſible of, and do ſtand condemned out of my own mouth. And thus far the circumſtances of all mankind are the ſame, that if God ſhould be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, the very beſt of us all could not abide it. *Pſal.* cxxx,

cxxx. 3, 4. But, bleſſed be God, though matters are deplorable, they are not quite deſperate; for there is mercy with him, and his juſtice is ſatisfied. The price and purchaſe of our ſouls is paid; our forfeited lives are ranſomed and redeemed; our ranſom in value exceeds the whole world; even his own beloved and only begotten ſon; who ſpared not his own life, but willingly poured out his ſoul to death; and is thereby become a ſacrifice and atonemeut for the ſins of wretched mortals. He hath promulged glad tidings of reconciliation and repentance, of pardon and peace. He came to ſave ſinners, even the chief of ſinners. Our God deſireth not the death of any; provided they believe, and ſincerely obey him: Not according to the ſhekel of the ſanctuary, which requires unſinning perfection; but after the ſtandard of the new covenant, which allows for human frailties, accepts ſorrow for the paſt; amendment for the time to come, a fervent love of God, and honeſt and diligent endeavours to ſerve him. This is a ſaying worthy to be accepted indeed; this is the comfort and confidence of poor returning ſinners. And, while I can ſee by faith the penalty of eternal damnation releaſed, by virtue of the blood of this lamb of God ſlain to take away the ſins of the world, I will ſubmit with patience to the temporal puniſhments inflicted by my provoked God; and thankfully accept the ſickneſſes and afflictions of this preſent life, as ſo many warnings and calls to repentance.

V. And ſure (my ſoul) we ſhall take care to make this good uſe of them. For theſe are the diſcipline of the Lord; and if, after all that is come upon me for my evil deeds, and for my great treſpaſſes, ſeeing that thou, my God, haſt puniſhed me leſs than my iniquities deſerve; if I ſhould again violate thy commandments, thou would'ſt certainly be angry, till thou had'ſt utterly conſumed me; *Ezra* ix. 13. and torment me ſo much the more, for neglecting ſo great ſalvation. I take therefore this chaſtiſement with all poſſible ſubmiſſion; and with unfeigned ſorrow confeſs my manifold offences. I implore thy mercy who art juſtly diſpleaſed at me; and ſince in the midſt of life we are in death, I cry earneſtly to thee for ſuccour; and beg, that howſoever thou thinkeſt fit to diſpoſe of this corruptible body, thou would'ſt look graciouſly upon me in thy dear ſon, and not deliver my poor ſoul into the bitter pains of eternal death; but pity and ſave me for Chriſt Jeſus his ſake. *Amen.*

Here may be repeated the xxxviii *and* li. Pſalms.

Then the confeſſion in the communion-ſervice.

Almighty God, the father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, maker of all things, &c.

Or elſe the three prayers at the end of the commination.

O Lord we beſeech thee, &c.
O moſt mighty God, &c.
Turn thou me, O good Lord, &c.

After either of which, ſay as follows.

PRAYER.

Viſitation of the ſick.

O Moſt mercifull God, who according to the multitude of thy mercies doſt ſo put away the ſins of thoſe who truly repent, that thou remembreſt them no more; grant me, I beſeech thee, true repentance and thy holy ſpirit; and then open thine eye of mercy upon my languiſhing condition, and give me the comfort of pardon and forgiveneſs. Renew in me moſt loving father whatſoever hath been decayed by fraud and the malice of the devil, or my own carnal will and frailneſs. Pre-

ſerve and continue me in the unity of thy church: guard me by thy power from all the aſſaults of the tempter, and ſuffer him not to take advantage of my weakneſs. Conſider, I beſeech thee, my contrition, accept my tears, hear my own prayers, and thoſe of others on my behalf, and aſſwage my pains, as ſhall ſeem to thee moſt expedient for me. In thy mercy, O Lord, I put my full truſt; in thy mercy alone, and in the merits and ſufferings of my crucified ſaviour. Impute not, O Lord, unto me my former ſins, but ſtrengthen me with thy bleſſed ſpirit; and whenever thou art pleaſed to take me hence, take me into thy favour, thro' the merits of thy dearly beloved ſon, Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

MED. IV.

Of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God.

I. WAS there no other conſideration to compoſe the mind, but that alone of our ſufferings being juſt, this ſhould in reaſon perſuade us to the conſtant exerciſe of meekneſs, and patience, and contentedneſs under them. For, as the prophet urges very well; *Wherefore doth a mortal man complain; even a man for the puniſhment of his ſin?* Lam. ii. The thief upon the croſs notwithſtanding all the hardning of his former profligate life, yet pacified himſelf under his pains, and reproved his reviling companion, with this reflection, that they were under the *condemnation juſtly, and received but the due reward of their evil deeds*, Luke xxiii. 41. But we have yet abundantly more, to quiet our repining thoughts, and ſilence all complaints; when the violence of an Affliction, or the ſufferings of a ſick bed, would provoke us to impatience. Our ſins have been many and great enough to make God our enemy, and cry but too loud for the utmoſt rigors of his vengeance; yet thoſe adverſaries are not the wounds and bruiſes of an enemy, but the chaſtiſements of a father. One that ſmites us indeed, but it is in righteouſneſs and friendſhip; and only with a deſign to reprove and reform us. Obſerve what heavenly comforts the Apoſtle hath left behind, and how God himſelf hath explained the nature and intent of his own diſpenſations. My ſon, deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth. If ye endure chaſtening, God dealeth with you, as with his ſons; for what ſon is he whom the father chaſteneth not? Furthermore, we have had fathers of our fleſh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; ſhall we not much rather be in ſubjection to the father of ſpirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chaſtned us after their own pleaſure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holineſs. Now no chaſtening for the preſent ſeemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheleſs afterwards it yeildeth the peaceable Fruit of righteouſneſs, unto them that are exerciſed thereby. *Heb.* xii.

II. What now can more illuſtrate the wiſdom of providence, than the converting our ſharpeſt calamities into occaſions of our virtue and happineſs? And which of all our calamities is more likely to contribute to our reformation, than thoſe of ſickneſs and pain? For theſe, by inflicting our own perſons, are moſt ſenſible and grievous to be born; and, by puniſhing the body, for the ſake and ſervice of which, moſt, if not all, our wickedneſſes are committed, they meet with the very cauſe, and go to the root of the diſeaſe, and ſo are beſt fitted to perfect the cure. Our phyſician of ſouls is both ſkilful and kind; he will not give us over out of a cruel indulgence to our own eaſe. Our father anſwers his character, and gives ſeaſonable correction to prevent our utter undoing. But in all this there is the prudence of the phyſician mixt with the tenderneſs of the parent. The one would not preſcribe the bitter cup, unleſs he knew it neceſſary and beſt for us; and if our circumſtances call for correction, it is with gentleneſs and reluctancy, with pain and yearning of bowels, that the other ſcourges.

III. Do thou therefore, O my ſoul! conſider, who chuſes for thee, and learn to reſign thy ſelf to his diſpoſals; for they are the appointments of one, who is wiſer than thou art, and who loves thee better than the tendereſt mother could. Do thou likewiſe conſider, why he chuſes for thee, and learn to improve under the ſeeming ſeverities of ſuch diſpenſations. Take gladly the wholeſome phyſick, and ſecure a good work to thy ſelf. Have no deſires or wiſhes of thy own, but, with a conſtant reſerve to the good pleaſure of God, think, and be aſſured, that what he does is beſt. Beſt in it ſelf, and beſt for thee too, if thy own fault hinder it not. Alas! we know not what to pray for as we ought, and ſhould therefore beg nothing poſitively, but that God would do what he ſees moſt expedient. Aſk therefore my ſoul, that he would make thee an inſtrument of his own glory; that he would ſupport thee in theſe Tryals, and not ſuffer thee to be tempted above that thou art able; that he would command all things to work together for thy good; and for the reſt, take thy ſaviour for thy pattern, and, as oft as thou prayeſt, that the cup may paſs from thee, be ſure forget not to add, from the very bottom of thy ſoul, *nevertheleſs*, O father, not my will, but thine be done.

IV. And, to render the cup thou art now drinking as little unpalatable as may be, forget not alſo to ſuſtain thy ſelf, with the comforts even of thy weakeſt condition. Seriouſly obſerve, how gracious the Lord is; how he hath not only ſpared, when thou haſt deſerved puniſhment, but in the very midſt of his wrath hath thought upon mercy. If thy pains be not perpetual thank him for thy intervals of eaſe and refreſhment: If they be not ſharp and extreme, thank him for the abatement and moderation of them. If thou canſt recruit thy feeble ſpirits with ſleep, thank him for cloſing up thy eyes, in gentle reviving ſlumbers; if he hold thy eyes waking, thank him for the opportunities of meditating and praying to him in the night ſeaſon. Yea, thank him eſpecially for continuing to thee thy underſtanding and thy ſenſes; and, that he hath given thee the power and the grace to make a good and holy uſe of theſe; that the length of thy ſickneſs hath been ſo much a larger opportunity of preparing for that important change, which, not this languiſhing body of thine only, but alſo all thoſe thou leaveſt behind in full health and beauty, and vigor, muſt ſhortly undergo. If thou endureſt much; conſider this is a good method of withdrawing thy affections from the world, and make thee thirſt and pant more earneſtly after the laſting joys of a better place. If a tedious lingering diſtemper aſſault, and almoſt weary out thy patience, think how much rather this is to be choſen, than the raging frencies of a fever, or the ſudden ſtroke of an appoplexy. Reflect upon the condition of thoſe wretches, who are ſnatched out of the world it may be, in an act of damning ſin; but however in an inſtant; without ſo much as the power, or leiſure, to ſeek pardon, or peace, to commit their ſouls to God, or ſo much as once ſupplicate his mercy at the laſt gaſp. O! what would they have given, how much more would they gladly have endured to purchaſe this long warning, theſe ſlow and ſolemn approaches of death, the happy advantages thou now enjoyeſt of trimming thy lamp, and putting thy ſoul in readineſs to meet the bridegroom at his coming? For, tho' we ought indeed to expect him every hour, even in our moſt eſtabliſhed health; yet well is it for that ſervant, who receives expreſs notice of his maſter's coming, and takes care ſo to provide for it, as in zealous prayers, and devout wiſhes to go out and meet him; and, having on the wedding garment, waits only for his laſt call, to enter with him to the marriage.

EJACULATIONS.

WHY art thou ſo heavy, O my ſoul! and why art thou ſo diſquieted within me? Still put thy truſt in God, for I will yet give him thanks, who is the help of my countenance, and my God. Pſal. xliii, 5, 6.

The Lord hath chaſtened and corrected me; but he hath not given me over unto deſtruction. Pſal. xviii, 18.

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right: and that thou of very faithfulneſs haſt cauſed me to be troubled. Pſal. cxix. 75.

It is of the Lord's mercies, that I was not long ago conſumed: becauſe his compaſſions fail not. Lam. iii. 22.

The Lord is my portion, ſaith my ſoul: therefore will I hope in him. Verſ. 24.

It is good for a man that he ſhould conſtantly hope, and quietly wait for the ſalvation of the Lord: for the Lord will not caſt off for ever. Verſ. 26.

But tho' he cauſe grief, yet will he have compaſſion, according to the multitude of his mercies. Verſ. 31 32. *Yea, like as a father pitieth his own children, even ſo is the Lord merciful unto them that fear him.* Pſal. ciii. 13.

In the multitude of the ſorrows which I have in my heart, thy comforts have refreſhed my ſoul. Pſal. xciv. 19.

For, I know, That with thee there is mercy: and with my God is plenteous redemption. Pſal. cxxx. 7.

O remember not my old ſins, but have mercy upon me, and that ſoon, for I am come to great miſery. Pſal. lxxix. 8.

Heal my ſoul, which hath ſinned againſt thee: and then let the Lord do what ſeemeth him good. Pſal. xli. 4. 1 Sam. iii. 18.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, *&c.*

As it was in the Beginning, *&c.*

PRAYER.

H*Ear me, Almighty and moſt merciful God and Saviour, extend thy accuſtomed goodneſs to me thy poor ſervant, now caſt upon this bed of languiſhing, and griev'd with ſickneſs. Sanctify, I beſeech thee this thy fatherly correction to me, and grant that*

I may receive it, with all the patience and ſubmiſſion of a dutiful child. I deſire to acknowledge and adore thy divine wiſdom and goodneſs, in every diſpenſation of providence towards me; and only beg, that thou wouldeſt keep me ſafe under all, and then uſe what methods thou pleaſeſt, of bringing me to thy ſelf. Manifeſt thy ſtrength in my weakneſs. Make even my feeble condition an inſtrument of thy glory; and, the more my outward man decayeth, ſtrengthen me, I beſeech thee, ſo much the more continually, with thy grace and holy ſpirit in the inner man. Let the ſenſe of my weakneſs add ſtrength to my faith, and ſeriouſneſs to my repentance. That if it be thy good pleaſure to reſtore me to my former health, I may lead the reſidue of my life in thy fear, and to thy glory; or elſe grant me ſo to take thy viſitation, that, after this painful life ended, I may dwell with thee in life everlaſting. For this, O Lord, is the chief, the moſt earneſt deſire of my ſoul, that whether I live, I may live unto the Lord, or whether I die, I may die unto the Lord; ſo that living and dying I may be thine, through Jeſus Chriſt, my dear and only Saviour. Amen.

MED. V.

Upon Recovery from Sickneſs.

I. IF dangers and diſtreſſes awaken our conſideration, ſurely the deliverance from them ought to excite our thankſgiving. The judgments of God extort complaints from us; and ſhall his mercies be received in ſilence? When he afflicts and wounds, we ſeek him early; and ſhall we forget him, when he refreſhes and heals us? That ſure were moſt unworthy, moſt reproachful. The rather ſo, becauſe we are able to give our ſelves a very plain and rational account, how it comes to paſs that we receive evil at the hand of God; but the good he vouchſafes us, furniſhes juſt matter no leſs of wonder, than of thankfulneſs. Death is the puniſhment of ſin; the diſeaſes and decays of our bodies are ſo many degrees of, and advances toward that death: And our conſciences can find no difficulty in juſtifying theſe painful diſpenſations. For none of us can deſcend into his own breaſt, without diſcovering infinite perſonal offences, which might provoke God to take this forfeited life, and to cut us off in the midſt of our days. But, when he forbears to do ſo, when he checks his wrath, and ſuſpends the execution of that fatal ſentence gone out againſt us; we can diſcern no reaſon for this in our ſelves, but muſt reſolve it all into the ſole, the undeſerved, goodneſs of our compaſſionate and long-ſuffering Lord.

And ſuch, my ſoul, is now thy caſe. Thou wert haſtening apace to the regions of death, and in fear that thou ſhould'ſt be depriv'd of the reſidue of thy years. But when thou waſt almoſt *cut off with pining ſickneſs, and thine eyes even failed with looking upward*; when thou *reckonedſt each night and morning*, that there would be *an end of thee*, upon earth; *Iſa.* xxxviii. 12, 13, then did the Lord ſtand by thee and *ſave thee*, even becauſe *he had a favour unto thee.* Pſal. xviii. 19.

II. Now, tho' this be the condition common to all mankind, that we contribute no part, to the efficient or meritorious cauſe of ſuch goodneſs; yet in n the final cauſe we may and muſt bear a very conſiderable part. We could not give the bleſſing to our ſelves: We could not deſerve that Almighty God ſhould give it us: But it will be incumbent upon us to take care, that ſuch grace be not beſtowed in vain; ſince ſtrictly ſpeaking, neither this, nor any other of the diſpenſations of providence, can poſſibly be in vain. For ſome effect they will of neceſſity have, even with regard to us. But if they anſwer not the good purpoſes, for which they were deſign'd, better were it for us, that we had never received them at all. The lengthning out our days, if we do not amend our manners, is but the miniſtring freſh and larger opportunities of adding yet more, to our ſins here, and to our torments hereafter. And happier had it been, to have been ſwept away with a ſwift deſtruction, than to be deliver'd from our fears, and to live ſuch a life afterwards as is certain to render us more miſerable in the end. For every mercy, every eſcape, muſt be accounted for; and theſe which are entertained unthankfully, will at length prove curſes, inſtead of bleſſings, to us. It will therefore become thee, my ſoul, very ſeriouſly to conſider, wherein true thankfulneſs conſiſts, and what are the inſtances, by which it muſt be expreſs'd.

III. When men do any ſignal acts of kindneſs to each other, the receiver, if he is able, thinks himſelf oblig'd to pay them back again, in ſome ſervice or benefit as good. This is what men cannot be excuſed from, provided fit opportunities offer, and their circumſtances enable them to do it. But when the power of doing this is wanting, we are ſenſible, that ſo much as falls ſhort in procuring a friend's real advantage, ought to be made up in all becoming teſtimonies of reſpect. In ſuch a readineſs of mind as plainly ſhews, that the party does not however want the will and hearty deſire, of returning ſuch favours in kind, and to the full.

Now the ſame rule of equity muſt needs hold toward our great benefactor in heaven. He is indeed ſo great, that his all-ſufficiency can neither need, nor receive, any addition. And we are ſo very poor and impotent, that it were the extremity of vanity and madneſs, to imagine our ſelves capable of adding to him. The utmoſt we can do is to demean our ſelves ſo, that he, and all the world, may plainly perceive us duly ſenſible of his bounty. Now this can be demonſtrated only by our conſtant and zealous care, to pleaſe and honour him, by taking delight in the obedience he hath enjoyned us, and teſtifying, by our practiſe, that we eſteem the ſervice of ſo liberal a maſter, our moſt reaſonable duty, and perfect freedom. Therefore our lips ought to ſet forth the praiſes of the Lord, and his kindneſs ſhould ever be in our mouths; yet are thoſe praiſes never ſet forth effectually, yet is that kindneſs never acknowledged as it ought, except our lives and every action proclaim it. The profeſſions of gratitude are of no conſideration in any caſe, farther than they expreſs the inward ſentiments of the heart. That heart cannot be truly grateful, which does not labour, and ſtudy, by all proper means, to approve it ſelf to the perſon, whoſe debtor it is. And how this is to be done to Almighty God, his own word hath informed us; by declaring, that the man who *truly honours him will order his converſation aright*, Pſal. l. 23.

that they who *love him* will give teſtimony of their affection, by *keeping his commandments.* John xiv. 15. that the *goodneſs and forbearance of God* (both in its natural and deſigned tendency) *leads to repentance,* Rom. ii. iv. that it even *conſtrains men to live no longer to themſelves,* but *to him who hath done ſo great things for them,* 2 Cor. v. 15.

IV. Theſe are reflections ſo ſelf-evident, ſo very obvious and natural to every man, that ſeldom are any remarkable calamities undergone, or deliverances obtained, without exciting them in our minds. Few wretches are ſo hardened in wickedneſs, few ſo abandoned, and loſt to all ſenſe of God and goodneſs, but in the ſeaſons of ſickneſs and danger, they ſee their paſt follies with diſpleaſure, and are convinced of the reaſonableneſs of forſaking them. But this is the general unhappineſs, this the great fault of moſt men, that ſuch remorſe quickly wears off, and their good intentions cool again. The ſmart of the rod ceaſes, and the ſucceſs of the correction is loſt with it. The health of the body grows more confirmed, and the conſcience hardens in proportion to the conſtitution. And thus the man returns to his old vanities and vices, with the ſame unconcernedneſs as before.

But, O my ſoul, let it not be thus with me. No. Let me look back with great ſeriousneſs, upon the vows I made, when I was in trouble; and conſider, that theſe were not to be tranſient and occaſional reſolutions; that they were intended for laſting obligations, and cannot be ſincerely diſcharged, unleſs they influence the remainder of that life, ſo graciouſly reſtored to me. I ought to look upon my ſelf as one raiſed from the dead, and favoured with life a ſecond time; that from henceforth I might employ and uſe the gift to the honour of the giver, who hath thus, as it were, created me afreſh. He ſaw it better, upon my requeſt, to continue me longer in this ſtate of tryal; and I ought to give the more earneſt heed thereunto; that every day added to my paſt years may prove a higher advancement in piety and virtue; that none of my holy purpoſes languiſh or die, as too many have formerly done; that this late approach to the grave may perpetually warn me of my mortality; and that, whenever death and judgment ſhall actually overtake me, (as overtake me they moſt certainly will) I may not be found leſs provided to meet my Lord, than this laſt ſummons left me.

For, can I reflect upon my late weakneſs, and entertain an imagination ſo vain, as that this body, in its greateſt vigor, may promiſe it ſelf an everlaſting continuance? Can I obſerve this youth of mine renewed as the eagle's, and attribute it to any other cauſe, than the almighty power and infinite goodneſs of him, who wounds and heals, who kills and makes alive, after the council of his own will? Can I acknowledge my preſent recovery owing entirely to that power and goodneſs, and not diſcover the indiſpenſible engagements, which lie upon me, to make ſome ſuitable returns? And what return is poſſible, what ſo proper, ſo acceptable, as that of a thankful heart; a diligent improvement of this mercy; life, in every part of it, entirely dedicated to him, who hath ſtrengthned his title now yet more, and made it upon ſo many accounts his own?

V. I will therefore be frequently reacting thoſe ſolemn exerciſes of repentance, performed in the bitterneſs of my ſoul; and by the repetition ſhew, that the good thoughts I entertained, continue to be the calm and ſettled determination of my more compoſed mind. I will ſtrictly examine, what fault is committed, what duties neglected, or but ſlightly performed, what abuſes, or what failures in a right improvement of health heretofore, might probably have provoked God, to caſt me upon the bed of ſickneſs, and reduce me to ſuch extremity of ſuffering. I will thank the Lord for giving me warning by this affliction; but eſpecially for touching and ſoftning my heart, and inſpiring me with godly ſorrow, and holy purpoſes. And to my own endeavours I will add my moſt fervent prayers, that the continuance of his grace may, out of this painful chaſtiſement, produce the peaceable and bleſſed fruits of righteouſneſs and faithful perſeverance. To this end I will not fail, frequently to renew my good reſolutions; to cheriſh and keep up in my ſoul all heavenly diſpoſitions, by conſtant private prayer and ſerious reflection; by attending duly upon the publick worſhip; by reading, and hearing; and conſcientiouſly applying God's holy word to my preſent circumſtances and neceſſities; by letting ſlip none of the precious opportunities for ſtrengthning my faith and other chriſtian virtues, in the ſacrament of my dear redeemer's body and blood. I will take heed to all my ways, be upon my guard againſt all temptations and occaſions of ſinning, moderate in my moſt lawful pleaſures and enjoyments, and diligent in all the duties, which the ſeveral relations wherein I ſtand, and the ſtate of life to which I am appointed by providence, require of me. *I will ſet a watch before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips, that I offend not in my tongue.* Pſal. cxli. 3. xxxix. 1. I will take heed, that I hurt not any man, by thought, word, or deed; but will extend my charity, as I am able, to all mankind. To the poor diſtreſſed members of my bleſſed Saviour, by ſuch ſuccours, as their condition ſtands in need of, and mine qualifies me to give; To others, by my good advice, and ſeaſonable inſtruction; to all, by my prayers and good wiſhes, and the powerful motive of a pious example: And even to my enemies, by meekneſs and forgiveneſs, even as God, for Chriſt's ſake, hath had compaſſion on me. I will make it my buſineſs to become every day more in love with religion; and to induce all with whom I converſe to be ſo; that I may, in ſome meaſure give a check to the abominations of this degenerate age in which I live, and adorn the doctrine of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, or at leaſt ſave my ſelf from this untoward generation. In a word, I will be ſure that the ſenſe of God's mercies (of this laſt in particular) may never depart out of my mind; but live, and grow, and bring forth fruit, which may influence me powerfully to diſcharge my duty, to the very laſt hour of my life.

VI. Nor think, my ſoul, that any reſolutions can be too ſtrict, any endeavour too much, upon this occaſion. For, after *all that is come upon me for my evil deeds, and for my great treſpaſs, ſeeing that my God hath puniſhed me leſs than my iniquities deſerve, and hath given me ſuch a deliverance as this;* Ezra ix,

ix. 13. *Should I again break his commandments; would he not then be angry with me till he had conſumed me, ſo that there ſhould be no eſcaping?* Verſ. 14. *O Lord, my God, thou art righteous, for I remain yet eſcaped*; Verſ. 15. but let not, I beſeech thee, this mercy, by being forgotten or abuſed, turn to my utter and eternal condemnation. For, that this muſt be the ſad conſequence of ſuch ingratitude at laſt, not only thy word hath told me, but I can plainly gather it from my own reaſon and experience. I feel what indignation the unkindneſs of perſons, whom I have particularly obliged, kindles in my breaſt; I find, that no ſort of reſentment is more uneaſy, no provocation harder to be born, than that which ariſes from the injuries and affronts of thoſe unworthy people, who preſume upon my friendſhip to uſe me ill. And can I ſuppoſe, that the juſt and jealous God will not call them to a ſevere account, who turn his grace into wantonneſs, and, when they live by miracles of bounty and long-ſuffering, live ſo, as to diſhonour him, and reproach the patience that ſpared them? The more remarkable and particular his goodneſs hath been, the heavier and more inſupportable, no doubt, will be that *wrath, which hardened and impenitent* wretches *treaſure up to themſelves, againſt the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*, Rom. ii. 5. So that our bleſſed Lord's admonition to the impotent man, is in effect the voice of reaſon, and every man's own conſcience. Each affliction, each eſcape calling out loudly to the receiver, *Sin no more, leſt a worſe thing come unto thee.* John v. 14.

And how indeed can it be expected, that infinitely worſe ſhould not come, when neither ſeverity will drive, nor compaſſion and kindneſs lead to amendment, when neither correcting, or ſparing, can do any good? The conditions of thoſe men are dangerous, whoſe diſtemper only is ſtrong: But theirs muſt needs be deſperate and mortal, whoſe very remedies feed and inflame their diſeaſe. If pruning and manuring be both in vain, the next ſentence upon the barren fig-tree is, *cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?* Luke xiii. The axe is already laid to the root, and if it be lifted up to give the fatal ſtroke, the end of *every tree, which bringeth not forth good fruit,* we are expreſly told ſhall be, *to be burnt with unquenchable Fire.*

VII. Theſe things, and divers others which will be apt upon ſuch occaſions to offer themſelves, if apply'd well and warmly to my conſcience, will have a very great and happy force, in forming my diſpoſition, and regulating my conduct, for the time to come. The recollection of God's abundant mercies will inflame my breaſt with holy gratitude and fervent love; ſuch as would keep me ever paſſionately deſirous, to pay the juſt tribute of my beſt ſervice in return, and chearfully to walk in the way of his commandments. The remembrance of his judgments will poſſeſs me with an awful fear of diſpleaſing him, and convince me, by my own experience, that no fleſh can ſtand before him, when he is angry, *Pſal.* lxxvi. My late languiſhings and feeble condition, will be a ſeaſonable and lively admonition, what this frail mortal nature is; theſe will teach me to die daily to the world, as a Perſon, who hath here no continuing city, but ought to ſeek one to come. *Heb.* xii. A perſon, who muſt not, from even the moſt confirmed health, entertain any ſuch fond proſpects and vain confidences of long life, as may tempt me to preſume death and judgment to be at a great diſtance, and myſelf ſecured againſt any ſurprize from them: Much rather ought I to expect them every moment; and, both from the daily Spectacles of mortality in my neighbours, and the ſenſible decays, or ſudden changes which happen to my ſelf, quicken my preparation to meet that lord, who hath *compared himſelf to a thief in the night*, and foretold us, that he *will come in ſuch an hour as we think not*. Matth. xxiv. 43, 44. Thus ſhall I, by a true chriſtian prudence, draw ſpiritual advantage out of temporal evils; diſcern the goodneſs and wiſdom of providence, even in the moſt afflicting diſpenſations; convert the pains and diſeaſes of a vile periſhing body, into inſtruments of ſtrength and health to my immortal ſoul; and have a happy occaſion of acknowledging with *David*, that *it is good for me to have been in trouble*, ſince by that *I have learnt*, more diligently to practiſe, and more ſtedfaſtly to perſevere in, *the ſtatutes of my God*, Pſal. cxix. 71.

HYMN.

P*Raiſe the Lord O my ſoul: and all that is within me praiſe his holy mame.* Pſal. ciii. 1.

Praiſe the Lord, O my ſoul: and forget not all his benefits. 2.

Who can expreſs the noble acts of the Lord; or ſhew forth all his praiſe? Pſal. cvi. 2.

Which forgiveth all thy ſins: and healeth all thine infirmities. Pſal. ciii. 3.

Which ſaveth thy life from deſtruction: and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindneſs. 4.

Which ſatisfieth thy mouth with good things; making thee young and luſty as an Eagle? 5.

For his arrows ſtuck faſt in me: and his hand preſſed me ſore. xxxviii. 2.

There was no health in my fleſh, becauſe of his diſpleaſure: neither was there any reſt in my bones, by reaſon of my ſin. 3.

My ſoul abhorred all manner of meat: and I was even hard at death's door: Pſal. cvii. 18.

Then cried I unto thee, O Lord: and got me to my Lord right humbly; Pſal. xxx. 3.

I ſaid, O my God, take me not away in the midſt of mine age: as for thy years they endure throughout all generations. Pſal. cii. 24.

But what profit is there in my blood: when I go down to the Pit? Pſal. xxx. 9.

Hear my prayer then, O Lord, and with thine ears conſider my calling: hold not thy peace at my tears. Pſal. xxxix. 13.

O ſpare me a little, that I may recover my ſtrength: before I go hence and be no more ſeen. 15.

So when I cried unto the Lord in my trouble: he deliver'd me out of my diſtreſs. Pſal. cvii. 19.

He ſent his word, and healed me: and I was ſaved from deſtruction. 20.

O! what great troubles and adverſities haſt thou ſhewed me, and yet didſt turn and quicken me: Yea, and broughteſt me from the deep of the earth again. Pſal. lxxi. 18.

Therefore will I praiſe thee and thy faithfulneſs, O God, Verſ. 20. *I will offer unto my God thankſgiving, and pay my vows unto the moſt higheſt.* Pſal. l. 14.

For the grave cannot praiſe thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down to the pit cannot declare thy truth. Iſ. xxxviii. 18.

But the living, the living he ſhall praiſe thee, as I do this day: the father to the children ſhall make known the goodneſs of the Lord, 19.

And they that know thy name, will put their truſt in thee: for thou, O Lord haſt never failed them that ſeek thee. Pſal. ix. 29.

As for me, I will give great thanks unto the Lord with my mouth: and praiſe him among the multitude. Pſal. lxvi. 14.

* *O come hither and hearken all ye that fear God: and I will tell you what he hath done for my ſoul.* Pſal. lxxviii. 15.

I was in miſery, and like unto him that is at the point to die: but he delivered me out of all my fear. Pſal. xxxiv. 4.

If the Lord had not helped me: it had not failed, but my ſoul had been put to ſilence. Pſal. xciv. 17.

But when I ſaid, my foot hath ſlipped: thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. 18.

Thou haſt turned my heavineſs into joy: thou haſt put of my ſackcloth, and girded me with gladneſs. Pſal. xxx. 11.

The Lord is my ſtrength and my ſhield, my heart hath truſted, in him, and I am delivered: therefore my heart danced for joy, and in my ſong will I praiſe him. Pſal. xxviii. 8.

O how plentiful is thy goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up for them that love thee: and that thou haſt prepared for them that put their truſt in thee, even before the ſons of men! Pſal. xxxi. 21.

O ye that love the Lord, ſee that ye hate the thing *that is evil: the Lord preſerveth the ſouls of the faithful, he delivereth them from the hand of the wicked one.* xcvii. 10.

His mercy and truth ſhall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the houſe of the Lord for ever. Pſal. xxiii. 6.

I will keep the ways of the Lord: and will not forſake my God as the wicked doth. Pſal. xviii. 21.

For I have an eye unto all his laws: and will not caſt out his commandments from me. Ver. 22.

Praiſed be the Lord, who hath not caſt out my prayer: nor turned his mercy from me. Pſal. lxvi. 18.

Yea, bleſſed be the Lord God, even the God of Iſrael; which only doth wondrous things. Pſ. lxxii. 18,

And bleſſed be the name of his majeſty for ever: and let all the earth be filled with his majeſty, Amen, Amen. Ver. 19.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghoſt.

As it was in the Beginning, is now, and ever ſhall be: World without end. *Amen.*

After this Hymn, the Reader may enlarge his Meditations to the ſame purpoſe by repeating the xxx, lxxi, lxxvii, cxvi, cxviii *Pſalms.*

PRAYER.

O Moſt mighty God and merciful father, wonderful in thy doings, and gracious in all thy diſpenſations toward the children of men; I thy unworthy ſervant proſtrate my ſelf before thee, with all the fervent affections of a grateful heart, acknowledging it thy goodneſs, that I am not long ago conſumed. *Thou, Lord, haſt chaſtned and corrected me,* *but thou haſt not given me over unto death.* Bleſſed therefore be that divine wiſdom, which ſaw this late affliction ſeaſonable, and would not ſuffer me to periſh in my folly, for want of ſuch neceſſary warning. Bleſſed be that tender compaſſion, which in the midſt of wrath remembred mercy, which made all my bed in my ſickneſs, which paſſed by my impatience, and many infirmities; and inclined a willing ear, to the wandring and diſcompoſed ſupplications, of a poor feeble wretch, when he cried unto thee in his extreme anguiſh and diſtreſs. Bleſſed be the powerful influences of that grace, which diſpoſed my heart to conſideration and repentance. But above all, bleſſed for ever be that power and goodneſs which, by ſparing me, when I had deſerved to be utterly cut off, hath given me opportunity to make good thoſe holy reſolutions, which thy grace inſpired, when I was in trouble. Lord, let this goodneſs of thine, and my own ſerious purpoſes of amendment, never ſlip out of my mind; but preſerve in me a conſtant tender ſenſe of the indiſpenſable obligations I lie under to better obedience. Make me every day more and more zealous in promoting thy glory, and the good of my brethren: As a perſon ſaved from deſtruction, for this very end, that the remainder of my life ſhould be employed in the ſervice of my gracious deliverer. In this ſenſe, O my God, I humbly offer and preſent unto thee this ſoul and body, reſcued from hell and the grave; beſeeching thee to keep them thine for ever. O let not the return of my health produce a relapſe into my former ſins; but become an inſtrument of thy greater honour, of my own ſtricter and more ſtedfaſt virtue here, and my more exquiſite happineſs hereafter. O! that the talents of time and ability to do good, which have been heretofore ſo wretchedly neglected, may (now they are afreſh committed to my truſt) be, for the time to come, ſo faithfully improved, that the ſhining graces of an exemplary converſation may hold ſome proportion with the bleſſings, I have been ſo particularly favoured withal. Let theſe excite, not me only but others alſo, by my example, to love thee more fervently, to ſerve thee more chearfully, to truſt in thee more aſſuredly. In thee O Lord, who *ſhewest us thy goodneſs ſo plenteouſly*, and *daily poureſt thy benefits upon us:* Pſal. lxviii, 19. ix. 10. In thee who *never faileſt nor forſakeſt them that ſeek thee:* lxvii. 4. In thee whoſe *mercies are ſweet*, whoſe *loving kindneſs is better than life it ſelf*, whoſe *ſervice is perfect freedom* and *in keeping of whoſe commandments there is exceeding great reward* xix. 11.

To this end, ſanctify, I beſeech thee, all the methods of thy providence to the ſalvation of my immortal ſoul; and eſpecially, let not thy abuſed mercies ever riſe up in judgment againſt me. O! may my paſt ſufferings work in me great humility and godly fear; that from them I may confirm my ſelf in faith and patience, and an entire reſignation to thy will, and wiſer appointments for me. Bring back frequently to my remembrance the promiſes and ſupplications, poured out in the bitterneſs of my ſoul; that thoſe ſucceſsful addreſſes to the throne of grace, may ſtir me up effectually, to the paying what I then ſo ſolemnly vowed. *Open thou my lips*, O Lord that my mouth *may declare thy mercy and truth as long as I live*, and *praiſe my God, while I have any being.* Pſal. civ. 33. And, foraſmuch as this recovery is only the lengthening out a little that ſpan of life, which muſt ſhortly have an end; ſuffer me not, I pray thee, to forget, that *I am a ſtranger upon earth*; but help me ſo to diſengage my heart from theſe things here below, which my own late experience hath taught me) *cannot profit in the day of wrath*; that my hopes and affections may be unalterably fixed upon thoſe better and eternal *treaſures* which *thou haſt prepared for them that love thee*. Let the thoughts and certain expectations of death and judgment be ſo conſtantly, ſo powerfully preſent to my ſoul that in *what hour ſoever my lord ſhall come*, I may be found ready to meet him, and to *go with him to the Marriage*. Even ſo, bleſſed Jeſus, grant me in ſuch manner to *paſs through things temporal, that I finally loſe not the things eternal*; but that I may uſe and improve thy grace here, till grace at laſt be ſwallowed up in glory, and I tranſlated to my maſter's joy. All which I beg for thy own merits ſake, my only mediator and redeemer: To whom, with the father and holy ſpirit, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, from me, and every creature, all honour and glory, dominion and power, thankſgiving and praiſe, and humble adoration, henceforth and for evermore. *Amen.*

MED. VI.

Of death

IT *is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the judgment*. Heb. ix. 27. So ſays the ſpirit of god himſelf; and what is thus appointed, none can reverſe, none can eſcape. That then, which remains for us, who lie under this ſentence, to do, is only to endeavour, that we may die, as becomes men and chriſtians: 2 Cor. v. 10. That is, as perſons, who expect to render an account of the things done in this body, and receive a recompence accordingly, whether it be good or bad. But who may abide that day? Or who ſhall ſtand, when the lord appeareth? Who indeed; when not only the thing it ſelf, but the very apprehenſions, and eſpecially the approaches, of it are ſo dreadful? For what is more terrible to mortal man, than dying; and what more ſo to ſinful man, than being judged? But, yet, my ſoul, ſince theſe muſt unavoidably come, let us ſee what courſe can be taken, to ſoften a little, and reconcile us to them; Nay, let us try, if it be not poſſible, not only to bear them contentedly, but even to meet them gladly.

II. If death be conſidered in it ſelf, it is no more, than what all the living creation here below undergoes, in common with our ſelves. And what is dying? It is a ceaſing to live, after the manner we now do. It is a removal, or rather, an eſcape, from a world of misfortunes and miſeries; of ſorrow and diſquiet; of malice and deceit; noiſe and contention; of pains and anguiſh; of croſſes and diſappointments; of vanity and vexation; and, which is worſt of all, of temptation and ſin. It is doing that once for all, which we have done in part, a thouſand times already; by ſickneſs and faintings, by the decays and Infirmities of nature; and by the loſs of tendereſt relations, who tore away our very heart with them. In ſhort the preſent life, even to the proſperous, will be found upon a juſt computation, to have made a very unequal diſtribution. For even ſuch have a larger proportion of trouble, than of happineſs. But to the generality of mankind, it is a rough tempeſtuous ſea; and death is the making their port, or at leaſt retiring into the ſhelter of a creek, where ſtorms can reach and annoy them no more. Theſe are not affected ſtrains of philoſophy, but weighed and meaſured truths; ſuch as every man is, or may be, ſadly convinced of, at his own expence. The only deceit ariſes from our natural fondneſs for living; which God hath wiſely infuſed, and woven into our ſouls, that we might be the better enabled to ſuſtain our preſent calamities. As, on the other hand, he hath made faith of a future ſtate our virtue, and ordained the miſeries of the preſent life, as an exerciſe for that virtue; that both together might be a balance at leaſt againſt the objects of ſenſe; draw off our affections from a place, which was never intended for our reſt; and raiſe our deſires up to thoſe better things, provided for us in another world. And ſurely, if this conſideration were well weigh'd, however timorous nature may ſtart and give way at firſt, yet it would be no hard matter to come cloſe up to death; and, by the help of familiar practice, and prudent pious meditation, to render not only the thoughts of it, but even the thing it ſelf, very tolerable to us.

III. But, if we conſider death in another capacity, as leading, and keeping, us cloſe priſoners, to a juſt and terrible judgment; thus it is attended with a ſting indeed, which is the ſenſe of guilt, and ſin unpardoned. This is what nothing can relieve, but the comforts ariſing from true repentance, from a Saviour ſacrific'd to expiate, and make full ſatisfaction for our offences; from a title to our part in that expiation, and favour of a reconciled God. And theſe, I hope, are comforts which belong to me.

For do but hear and obſerve (my ſoul) what reviving words the holy ſpirit hath ſpoken to this purpoſe. *If any man ſin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our ſins.* 1 John 1, 2. Chriſt hath dy'd, who is he that condemneth? Yea, Chriſt is riſen again, and ſeated at the right hand of God, a perpetual interceſſor, and a mighty Saviour to all them that come to God by him. *Rom.* viii, He hath told thee, that what the infirmity of the law and the fleſh could not do, Chriſt hath done for us; *Heb.* ii. & iv. that he knows and hath felt our weakneſſes, and will not fail to make large and very gracious allowances for them; that Jeſus hath waſhed us in his own blood, and though our ſins be as ſcarlet, yet, upon our true repentance, they ſhall be white as ſnow. *Rev.* i. 5. *Iſa.* i. 18. Look up then, and ſee thy Lord coming in the clouds: Thou muſt be judged, 'tis true, but thy redeemer ſhall be thy judge. And to whoſe deciſion would'ſt thou chuſe to ſtand, but to thy beſt friend's? To him, who loved thee ſo dearly, as to die for thee, to be made ſin and a curſe for thee, that thou mighteſt be made the righteouſneſs of God in him? This is thy ſure confidence; and heaven and earth may paſs away, but his merits and promiſes can never fail. And he hath promiſed, that all who repent and believe, and ſerve and love him, ſhall be ſaved in that day, and be where he is, to behold his glory. *John* xvii. Nay, not to behold only, but to enjoy it; to live, and reign, with the ſon of God himſelf. For ſuch he hath made ſons alſo, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt, of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved for them in the heavens. *Rom.*

viii. 17. 1 *Pet.* i. 4. 1 *John* iii. 2. And if I know that I love God, I know, that I ſhall be with him, and be like him, and ſee him as he is.

IV. O glorious day, which will bring me to the full and inſeperable enjoyment of my deareſt Saviour and moſt merciful God, when this veil of fleſh ſhall be done away, and ſpiritual joy, and peace, and knowledge, and love, ſhall forever abound! Bleſſed be thy name O God, who haſt opened an entrance into ſuch bliſs for poor returning ſinners! Bleſſed be thy bounty, who haſt ordained ſuch an infinite recompence, for our imperfect and unworthy labours! And, if thou haſt decreed withal that I muſt paſs thro' the regions of darkneſs and death, to come at thoſe ſeats of light and glory; ſhall I grudge this Paſſage? When I have born the heat and burthen of the day, ſhall I mourn, becauſe the evening is come, and ſhrink back, when I am called to receive my wages? Some difficulties I know there are: But thou, O Lord, will ſtrengthen my faith, and not ſuffer me to faint, under the terrors and conflicts of my laſt tryals. Give me grace, I beſeech thee, to conſider, that this is the method, by which thy own Son was made perfect; that it is no more, nay, it is much leſs, than he ſuffered voluntarily, and for my ſake; that, by ſuffering death he hath overcome it, and rendered the conflict more eaſy to them that come after. Grant me to rejoice, at leaſt to ſupport my ſelf, with the nearer proſpect of an eternal reſt and reward.

V. And do thou, O my ſoul, labour continually to ſtrengthen thy own frailties and fears, with holy meditations, with the repeated exerciſes of faith, and repentance, of truſt, and love, and heavenly-mindedneſs. Bid adieu to this vain world, and ſhake hands with it chearfully. As for all that is uneaſy here, thank God for a deliverance from it; and for all, whom thou haſt reaſon to love and be concerned for, remember that, thou leaveſt them under the conduct of the ſame good providence, of which thy ſelf haſt had ſo large experience. Conſider that God is all relations, and more than all, to thoſe that want them; and, if they continue to ſeek and ſerve him diligently, he will never forſake them, but be their God, and their guide, unto death. Bid all my friends weep, not for me, but for themſelves, who are ſtill in a ſtate of danger and temptation, of vanity and miſery, from which they that die in the Lord are for ever releaſed. Tell them, that we ſhall ſee one another again ſhortly. And as I am going now to thoſe dear and good ſouls, who have got the ſtart of me in this journey; ſo they, and I, and all God's children, ſhall have a glorious, a joyful meeting, at the reſurrection of the juſt. We ſhall all go together into a place, whence tears and mourning are for ever baniſh'd; where the viſion of God, the ſervice of the lamb, the company of angels and ſaints ſhall miniſter eternal matter of praiſe and joy; and our happineſs will exceed all we can conceive, all we can hope for. And now, *O death! where is thy ſting? O grave! where is thy victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55. Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory, thro' our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Therefore (my ſoul) be thou ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as I am aſſured that my labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.

EJACULATIONS.

WHile I am at home in the body, I am abſent from the Lord; for I walk by faith, not by ſight; therefore I am confident, and willing rather to be abſent from the body, and to be preſent with the Lord. 2 Cor. v. 6, 7, 8.

Lord, whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire in compariſon of thee. Pſal. lxxiii. 25.

My fleſh and my heart faileth, but God is ſtill my ſtrength, and my life, and my portion for ever. ver. 26.

Fearfulneſs and trembling are come upon me, and an horrible dread hath overwhelmed me.

For the enemy of ſouls crieth out aloud, and the ungodly one cometh on faſt; he is minded to do me ſome miſchief, ſo maliciouſly is he ſet againſt me. But I am thine, O ſave me; I am bought with a price, O Jeſus, even with thy moſt precious blood. I am one of thy ſheep, rebuke this ravening wolf, for thou art greater than he; and none is able to pluck me out of thy hand. Pſal. lv.

Thou that takeſt away the ſins of the world have mercy upon me. Thou that takeſt away the ſins of the world receive my prayer; Thou that ſitteſt at the right hand of God, have mercy upon me. Communion Service.

Thou, Lord, art full of compaſſion and mercy, long-ſuffering and of great goodneſs; O deal not with me after my ſins, nor reward me according to my iniquities. Pſal. ciii. 8. 10.

Thou knoweſt whereof we be made, and remembreſt that we are but duſt. Look graciouſly therefore *upon my weakneſs; pity the interruptions and imperfections of my prayers; pardon what I cannot now do with a ſteady and compoſed zeal, and accept the ſincerity of my heart.* Ver. 14.

Thou knoweſt, Lord, the ſecrets of my ſoul, ſhut not thy merciful ears to my prayers, but ſpare me, Lord moſt holy, O God moſt mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou moſt worthy judge eternal, ſuffer me not at my laſt hour for any pains of death to fall from thee. Burial Service.

Faithful is he that hath ſaid, I will never leave thee nor forſake thee: *Heb.* xiii. *Lord, grant me the knowledge and ſenſible experience of this moſt gracious promiſe. Stand by me, and ſave me from the reproof of him that would eat me up,* Pſal. lvii. *Deliver my ſoul from the roaring lyon, who goeth about continually, ſeeking whom he may devour.* 1 Pet. iv.

Lord, I commit my ſoul unto thee, as into the hands of a faithful creator, and moſt merciful redeemer. 1 Pet. v. 8. *Spare it, O God, and let it be thine in the day when thou makeſt up thy jewels,* Mal. iii. *In the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord deliver me.* Litany,

PRAYER.

O Almighty Lord, father of all mercies, and God of all comfort, I flee unto thee for ſuccour in this my great extremity; moſt humbly beſeeching thee, to ſupport and ſtrengthen me in the laſt conflict of my life. Deliver me from the ſnares and terrors of the wicked one, ſuſtain my agonies with the peaceful comforts of a quiet and good conſcience,

ſcience, and of perfect reconciliation with thee, my God. Lord, as thou bringeſt me nearer to thy ſelf, ſo let my love, and my deſires of thee be ſtronger, And O that it may pleaſe thee in thy abundant mercy, to afford me ſome ſweet foretaſte of future bliſs, that I may triumph even in death it ſelf: But if in this I know not what I aſk; yet at leaſt ſuffer not my faith to be ſhaken, nor thy loving-kindneſs to fail; and, however thou dealeſt with this corruptible body, let my ſoul, I implore thee, be precious in thy ſight. Waſh it in the blood of the immaculate Lamb of God, that, all its pollutions being purged and done away, it may be preſented pure and unblemiſhed before thee, and be received into thy everlaſting kingdom, thro' the merits and mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, thy only Son, our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

Short EJACULATIONS for the laſt Extremeties.

I *Believe, bleſſed Jeſus, that thou ſhalt come to be my judge; I therefore pray thee help thy ſervant, whom thou haſt redeemed with thy precious blood.* Te Deum.

O make me now to be numbered with thy ſaints in glory everlaſting.

The ſnares of death compaſs me round about, and its pains get hold upon me; haſte thee, O God, to deliver me, make haſte, O Lord, to help me. Pſal. cxvi. lxx.

Thy Kingdom come, O God, Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven.

Lord Jeſus, receive my ſpirit.

Come Lord Jeſus, come quickly.

Theſe laſt may be uſed by the Friends and Standers-by, with the neceſſary alteration of the Perſon, after the ſick Party is diſabled from the Uſe of them.

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